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LORD TENNYSON

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ORD TENNYSON

1809-1892

A Biographical Sketch

BY

HENRY J. JENNINGS

AUTHOR OF "CARDINAL NEWMAN: THE STORY OF HIS LIFE,"
"CURIOSITIES OF CRITICISM," ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE greater part of this volume was published in 1884, while Lord Tennyson was alive; and it is perhaps permissible to state now, in answer to one or two critics who thought that undue liberty had been taken with some particulars of his private life, that the manuscript passed in the first instance through the hands of a near member of his family, to whose friendly co-operation the details referred to owed their appearance in the text. Since then a number of Autobiographies and Reminiscences have seen the light, many of which contained interesting references to Tennyson. These, together with a brief record of his life since 1884, have been incorporated in the present edition. In due course, no doubt, a more exhaustive biography will be forthcoming from the pen of one who was on terms of close intimacy with the poet; but in the mean time this sketch—for it purports to be nothing more—of the more notable incidents of a long and illustrious career will, I hope, be of some small service to Lord Tennyson's admirers.

H. J. JENNINGS.

GROSVENOR CLUB,

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LORD TENNYSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE materials for a biography of Lord Tennyson, apart from the purely literary incidents of his life, are not considerable. Few among the noteworthy personages of our time more assiduously shrank from the public gaze, or shunned with a more sensitive persistency the "fierce light" which, in this prying age, beats upon the domestic concerns of eminent men. His life was essentially one of retirement, yielding little to the "literary leeches" who swarm in these "days that deal in ana." Seldom, during a long life, to be met with in that vortex of wasted ambitions called "fashionable society"—rarely taking part in public affairs—avoiding with something of shyness all kinds of conventional ceremony and popular hero-worship, he "dwelt apart," in a very literal sense of the words, from the hubbub and turmoil of the great world, and in his country homes, in the company of a few chosen friends, secluded from the reach of the curious, led a life of studious contemplation, shaping into imperishable verse the strivings of the poet's soul. Although in later life the mellowing influences of age relaxed somewhat the austerity of his isolation and social reserve, he cherished for the most part an emphatic prejudice against, sometimes deepening into a great hatred of, the babblement that dogs the heels of fame. He never gave the faintest encouragement to those enterprising *littérateurs* who delude themselves with the comforting belief that they are benefiting mankind by lifting the curtain

which veils the privacy of a great man's home-life. That he had a wholesome dread of the fate which, even after a poet has shuffled off this mortal coil, may await him at the hands of indiscreet biographers, is shown by the verses which, in 1849, he wrote in the *Examiner*, "after reading the Life and Letters of a Deceased Poet" :—

- " For now the poet cannot die,
 Nor leave his music as of old,
 But round him ere he scarce be cold
 Begins the scandal and the cry :
- " ' Proclaim the faults he would not show :
 Break lock and seal : betray the trust :
 Keep nothing sacred : 'tis but just
 The many-headed beast should know.'
- " Ah, shameless ! for he did but sing
 A song that pleased us from its worth ;
 No public life was his on earth,
 No blazoned statesman he, nor king.
- " He gave the people of his best :
 His worst he kept, his best he gave.
 My Shakespeare's curse on clown and knave
 Who will not let his ashes rest ! "

The passionate indignation of these lines has lost none of its fire, and the invocation none of its warning. They remind the biographer, if he were in any need of such a reminder, that the range of his inquiries has limitations, and that the scope of his narrative must be bounded by a sense of what is due to the rights of privacy. Of Lord Tennyson's life, apart from the records of his literary work and the glimpses occasionally afforded by the divulging candour of his personal friends, not a great deal is known, and only the vulgar would seek, without the direct encouragement of family sanctions, to know more.

Alfred Tennyson was born on August 6, 1809, at Somersby, a village in Lincolnshire, about half-way between Spilsby and Horncastle. He was one of twelve children, of whom seven were sons. His elder brothers, Frederick and Charles, became favourably known, when they reached manhood, as writers of poetry that would unquestionably—especially that of Charles—have made a larger mark in the world but for the overshadowing

dominance of his own powers. Frederick has published two or three volumes of poems, "Days and Hours," "The Isles of Greece," and "Daphne and other Poems." Many of his efforts, especially those which deal with classic legend, are characterized by considerable wealth of imagery and a subtle depth of thought. His letters are well worthy to give him a place among famous letter-writers, and show how false in his case, as in that of Alfred, is the popular belief that a good poet is never a good prose writer. The other brothers in a less conspicuous degree wooed the muses, but their fugitive pieces, with scarcely an exception, have been borne on the bosom of that rushing river which carries so much literary drift, promising as well as worthless, down to the great sea of oblivion.

Alfred Tennyson's father was the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, LL.D., rector of Somersby and vicar of Grimsby, who married Elizabeth Fytche, daughter of the vicar of the neighbouring town of Louth. Dr. Tennyson was the son of a wealthy retired lawyer, George Tennyson of Bayon's Manor, Lincolnshire, but the bulk of the property went to the second son Charles, uncle of Alfred, who subsequently took the name of D'Eyncourt by royal licence, and was for some time member of parliament for Lambeth. The Tennysons were, in fact, of ancient and honourable descent, tracing their pedigree to the Plantagenets through the old Norman family of D'Eyncourt. In view of the poet's elevation to the peerage in 1883, and the criticisms which, in certain quarters, it provoked, this distinguished ancestry has an interesting significance.

A halo of romantic interest always hangs about the birth-places of distinguished men. The homes and haunts of genius are hallowed spots—shrines invested by the pilgrim and the worshipper with unique and memorable interest. In years to come Somersby, by reason of Tennyson having been born there, will be detached in the world's esteem from the multitude of English villages with which it possesses features in common. Any one picturing it without the guidance of description would probably fancy that it partook

of the characteristics popularly supposed to belong to Lincolnshire. But Somersby, although not far from the fens, is not the flat uninteresting spot one might imagine from this ominous propinquity. Years ago, William Howitt, in his delightful descriptions of the haunts of the British poets, pictured the locality in which Tennyson was born, and where he spent the early years of his life: "The native village of Tennyson is not situated in the fens, but in a pretty pastoral district of softly sloping hills and large ash-trees. It is not based on bogs, but on a clean sandstone. There is a little glen in the neighbourhood, called by the old monkish name of Holywell. Over the gateway leading to it some by-gone squire has put up an inscription, a medley of Virgil and Horace; and within, a stream of clear water gushes out on a sand rock, and over it stands the old school-house, almost lost among the trees, and of late years used as a wood-house, its former distinction only signified by the Scripture text on the walls, 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' There are also two brooks in this valley, which flow into one at the bottom of the glebe field, and by these the young poet used to wander and meditate." The physiography of Somersby is described in a few bold touches by the Rev. D. Rawnsley, a connection of the poet's by marriage. "To the north," he says, "rises the long peak of the wold, with its steep white road that climbs the hill above Thetford; to the south the land slopes gently to a small deep-channelled brook, which rises not far from Somersby, and flows just below the parsonage garden."

Amid the picturesque associations of this Lincolnshire rectory, beneath its leafy elms and within the sound of its ever-brawling brook, Tennyson's childhood was passed. That these associations wove themselves into the web of his being is certified by the vividness of his description of their smallest details. In the "Ode to Memory," he speaks of

"The woods that belt the gray hill-side,
 The seven elms, the poplars four
 That stand beside my father's door,
 the brook that loves
 To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,

Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
In every elbow and turn,
The filtered tribute of the rough woodland."

The inspirations of Somersby scenery, with its "ridged wolds," may be traced in more than one passage of Tennyson's early writings, and gave local colour to some of the maturer ones. The brook which "prattled the primrose fancies of the boy" was no doubt the same that with memorable repetition babbled the assertion of its own changeless character of unrest. The "gray old grange" on the hill-slope, "the sheep-walk up the windy wold," the "hoary knoll of ash and haw," the "pastoral rivulet that swerves to left and right through meadowy curves," the rectory garden, where the sunflower, "shining fair, rays round with flames her disc of seed," and, about all, "the circle of the hills," were the meet environment of a poetic childhood.

Not less happily was Tennyson placed in his parentage. All gracious influences of pious living, redeemed from austerity by the refining quality of cultured tastes, shed their warm and mellowing rays over that tranquil Somersby home. Dr. Tennyson was a tall, striking man, remarkable for great strength, accomplished in many ways, "something," we are told, "of a poet, painter, architect, and musician, and also a considerable linguist and mathematician." As in the case of most men of strong and well-defined character, his conduct was charged with a large measure of energy. One friend of the family seems to give us a rough and ready means of estimating his quality, in the two expressive epithets, "high-souled and high-tempered." How large a place he had in his son Alfred's affections finds expression in the lines to J. S. This tribute, in which the heart of the poet speaks its regrets, suggests, although perhaps but faintly, the reverence inspired in the family circle at Somersby by its head, and the mingled love and gratitude with which his authority was in after years remembered. The poet's mother—if we may further draw aside the curtain from this sacred home-life—was a lady of a grave and gracious sweetness. "Mrs. Tennyson," says

Mrs. Thackeray-Ritchie, who had the information from one who was personally acquainted with her, "was a sweet and gentle and most imaginative woman; so kind-hearted that it had passed into a proverb, and the wicked inhabitants of a neighbouring village used to bring their dogs to her windows and beat them, in order to be bribed to leave off by the gentle lady, or to make advantageous bargains by selling her the worthless curs. She was intensely, fervently religious, as a poet's mother should be."

In the early part of the century, Somersby was a village of fewer than seventy inhabitants, as rural in its retirement as the heart of a purely agricultural county could possibly be, and the young Tennysons were consequently thrown very much on their own resources. In this remote Lincolnshire home, the great roll of circumstance that quickened the pulses of the outer world was slow to make its echoes heard. These children heard nothing of the battle of Waterloo at the time. But they had a world of their own, a mimic world of romance, peopled with the creatures of their own bright fancy. "The boys," Mrs. Ritchie narrates, "played great games, like Arthur's knights: they were champions and warriors defending a stone heap; or, again, they would set up opposing camps with a king in the midst of each. The king was a willow wand stuck into the ground, with an outer circle of immortals to defend him, of firmer, stiffer sticks. Then each party would come with stones, hurling at each other's king, and trying to overthrow him. Perhaps as the day wore on they became romancers, leaving the jousts deserted. When dinner-time came, and they all sat round the table, each in turn put a chapter of his history underneath the potato-bowl—long, endless histories, chapter after chapter, diffuse, absorbing, unending, as are the stories of real life of which each sunrise opens on a new part; some of these romances were in letters, like 'Clarissa Harlowe.' Alfred used to tell a story which lasted for months, and which was called 'The Old Horse.' " *

The more serious work of education was not, meanwhile, neglected. Alfred was taught the rudimentary subjects, partly at home and partly at "Cadney's village school." A liking for books was naturally kindled among such scholarly associations as those of the rectory, and with an appreciation of literary form came the boy's ambition to express his thoughts in picturesque arrangements of words. When quite an infant, he had given precocious evidence of the possession of thoughts usually far removed from the cramped intelligence of childhood. At five years of age, little Alfred, as the wind was sweeping through the rectory garden, suffered himself to be blown along by it, threw out his arms in an ecstasy of enjoyment, and exclaimed, with a Wordsworthian sense of something beyond the mere roar of the tempest, "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind." The thoughts that seethed and simmered in the crucible of his boyish intellect, by and by shaped themselves in crude attempts at metrical form. Mrs. Ritchie must again be laid under contribution as to the momentous episode of the first poetical attempt. "Alfred's first verses, so I once heard him say, were written upon a slate which his brother Charles put into his hand one Sunday at Louth, when all the elders of the party were going into church, and the child was left alone. Charles gave him a subject—the flowers in the garden—and when he came back from church, little Alfred brought the slate to his brother, all covered with written lines of blank verse. They were made on the model of Thomson's 'Seasons,' the only poetry he had ever read. One can picture it all to one's self, the flowers in the garden, the verses, the little poet with waiting eyes, and the young brother scanning the lines. 'Yes, you can write,' said Charles, and he gave Alfred back the slate. I have also heard another story, of his grandfather, later on, asking him to write an elegy on his grandmother, who had recently died, and, when it was written, putting ten shillings into his hands, and saying, 'There, that is the first money you have ever earned by your poetry, and, take my word for it, it will be the last.' " Predictions of this depreciatory kind often

have the effect of stimulating courageous and hopeful natures to bring about their falsification. Whether or not this was the case with little Alfred Tennyson, he was not to be deterred from the worship of the muse by the kindly banter of a grandfather who probably entertained the then common notion that poetry was a drug in the market, and that even publishers did not want to buy verses, unless they had the fire of Byron's, or the melody of Shelley's, or the romanticism of Scott's.

The anecdote related above, about Charles Tennyson, seems to indicate a superiority of judgment rather out of proportion to the difference in the ages of the two brothers. He was Alfred's senior by only one year, and it must be inferred (as this story has the direct authentication of one of the actors) that his critical faculty had ripened with exceptional quickness. His own poetical tastes, although they never reached such a maturity of blossom as his brother's, were in after years to more than fulfil an early promise of sweetness of expression and gracefulness of form. The two lads grew up in the close kinship of like tastes. Being the elder, Charles had, however unconsciously, something to do with the schooling of his junior's budding capacity; but the existence of special gifts in the latter was recognized at a very early period in the Tennyson household, and many counsels and encouraging words were, no doubt, forthcoming from all but the youngest members of the circle. Alfred was notable to the village gossips, in this early boyhood, by reason of his passion for the sea. Many of his early poems are said to have been written to the moaning music of the German Ocean, as it rolled in restless breakers upon the Lincolnshire coast. There is a tradition that he once ran bareheaded all the way from Somersby to the shore, to be inspired by the never-ceasing suggestiveness of the melancholy sea. Here, truly, was the right sort of stuff for the making of a poet.

Influences other than those of Thomson's "Seasons" opened up fresh visions and suggested new ideals to the young poet's fancy. He fell under the wand of the magician

Scott, whose sorcery, in turn, gave place to the grander sway of Byron. When he was nearly fifteen, the news of Byron's death filtered through the slow channels of communication that connected Somersby, in some dilatory fashion, with the throbbing tides of life in cities and towns. The news of that brilliant career cut short in the prime of manhood moved with a great sorrow the universal heart of all Englishmen in whom a dread of his daring sentiments had not warped the sense of his colossal proportions; it smote with a dull experience of bereavement too large for words his youthful admirer in the Lincolnshire hills. "Byron was dead! I thought the whole world was at an end," he once said, speaking of those by-gone days. "I thought everything was over and finished for every one—that nothing else mattered. I remember I walked out alone, and carved, 'Byron is dead!' into the sandstone."

Both Charles and Alfred Tennyson were sent to Louth grammar school, a wealthy old foundation, where, a year or two after they left, Edward John Eyre, subsequently Governor of Jamaica, entered as a pupil. Alfred's stay at Louth extended from the end of 1816 to the end of 1820. "Lord Tennyson's only surviving schoolfellow," says Mr. J. C. Walter, "Mr. J. W. Wilson, one of the most honoured citizens of Louth, who has been for fifty years associated with the public life and progress of that town, tells me that he remembers Alfred Tennyson being in the school, but he never knew him associate with the other lads, or take part in their sports. His sole friend was his brother Charles. The two were inseparable, and were in the habit of taking long walks together and rigidly excluding themselves from all other companionship. It was Charles who understood the poetic sensibility of the younger brother, who gave him suggestions, and who saw his first lines written on a slate while the rest of the family were at church. The two boys were grave beyond their years, but not otherwise remarkable. They displayed no particular talent in their classes, and though tall and stalwart, they indulged in no course of exercise, and in the playground were unknown."

The Laureate still remembers walking with his school-fellows, adorned with blue ribbons, to celebrate the coronation of George IV., and the old wives said the boys made the prettiest part of the show. There are absolutely no school traditions extant about Alfred Tennyson. There is not even the customary desk carved with his name, to perpetuate in virtuous and heroic proportions the audacity of the youthful genius in disfigurement.

The reading of both brothers was of a higher and more varied kind than constitutes the usual recreation of the British schoolboy. They dipped into a well-furnished library with appreciative zeal. During those days their poetical inclinations were assiduously cultivated. The routine of their regular studies was relieved by frequent incursions into the domain of the muses. Their little fugitive pieces at length began to assume the dimensions of a collection, and a yearning for publicity followed as a matter of course. An ambition like theirs could not be satisfied with the passing of their manuscript from the hands of one admiring relative to another. The desire to see the productions of their minds in print is a feeling which the greatest geniuses share with the most commonplace scribblers. Nowadays, perhaps, it would be thought presumptuous for lads of seventeen to soar with untried wings into the perilous altitudes of publication. Probably, too, their audacity in that respect would meet with but little encouragement from publishers, especially if their work contained only the faintest indication of promise. Verses, unless they are of exceptional merit, are not a very saleable commodity, and it is a little surprising, even when the quality of the young poets' attempts is taken into account, that they should have found any one enterprising enough to buy the copyright, albeit for the sufficiently modest sum of ten pounds. But this actually happened in 1827. Messrs. Jackson, booksellers and printers of Louth, gave the amount named for the little collection of "*Poems by Two Brothers*," one hundred and two in number, which was published in London (no doubt by an arrangement not uncommon with country printers)

by Messrs. Simpkin & Marshall. It is not unlikely that the Jacksons were more influenced by the opinions of others than by any high critical sagacity of their own. The Tennysons' maternal grandfather was the vicar of Louth (though dead long before they went there), and they must have been well known in the society of the little town. Their reputation and promise would, no doubt, be the theme of common gossip, and the Messrs. Jackson may have had reasonable expectation of being recouped for their outlay by a fair sale of copies among the poets' own circle of friends.

This little volume of two hundred and twenty-eight pages bore for its motto on the title-page the quotation from Martial, "*Hæc nos novimus esse nihil*"—a self-depreciatory acknowledgment not entirely consistent with the boldness of the enterprise. We learn from the preface that these pieces "were written, not conjointly, but individually, which may account for their difference of style and matter." The differences were not confined to style and matter. Not only were the subjects as various as possible, but experiments, often of a crude kind, were made in many metres. The pages were burdened with foot-notes, and nearly every poem had a quotation from some well-known author—the sources thus laid under tribute including Addison, Beattie, Byron, Cowper, Gray, Hume, Moore, and Scott among modern, and Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Terence, Lucretius, Sallust, and Tacitus among classical writers. Byron is quoted six times, and his death made the subject of a poem. It is difficult to pronounce with certainty which of the productions in this now excessively scarce and priceless little volume are to be attributed to Lord Tennyson. A painstaking bibliographer, after a minute analysis of each poem and a comparison with later and acknowledged writings, concludes that "*Antony to Cleopatra*," "*The Old Sword*," "*The Vale of Bones*," "*Persia*," "*Egypt*," "*Midnight*," "*Time: an Ode*," "*On a Dead Enemy*," "*Lines on hearing a Description of the Scenery of Southern America*," "*On the Moonlight shining upon a Friend's*

Grave," "Switzerland," and "The Oak of the North," may, with tolerable sureness, be assigned to the Laureate.*

The critics did not make haste to discover the promise of these early pieces. For the most part, if the book came under their notice at all, it was treated with cold and contemptuous neglect. Only one contemporary criticism has been traced, namely, that which appeared in the *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* (May 19, 1827), in which it is said, "This little volume exhibits a pleasing union of kindred tastes, and contains several little pieces of considerable merit."

To criticize these *juvenilia* in any serious spirit were a purposeless task, even if we could decide with absolute certainty which of them were the work of Alfred. Passages here and there betoken a far higher quality than is generally to be met with in the versification of schoolboys. There is something, for instance, of martial music in the lines—

"When to battle proudly going,
Your plumage to the wild winds blowing,
Your tartans far behind ye flowing,
Your pennons raised, your clarions sounding,
Fiercely your steeds beneath ye bounding."

The following extract from "Antony to Cleopatra" foreshadows the finer treatment of the same subject in "The Dream of Fair Women":—

"O Cleopatra! fare thee well,
We two can meet no more;
This breaking heart alone can tell
The love to thee I bore.
But wear thou not the conqueror's chain
Upon thy race and thee;
And tho' we ne'er can meet again,
Yet still be true to me:
For I for thee have lost a throne
To wear the crown of love alone.

"Fair daughter of a regal line!
To thralldom bow not tame;
My every wish on earth was thine,
My every hope the same.
And I have moved within thy sphere,
And lived within thy light;

* R. H. Shepherd, "Tennysonianism,"

And oh ! thou wert to me so dear,
 I breathed but in thy sight !
 A subject world I lost for thee,
 For thou wert all my world to me !

“ Then, when the shriekings of the dying
 Were heard along the wave,
 Soul of my soul ! I saw thee flying,
 I followed thee to save.
The thunder of the brazen prow
O'er Actium's ocean rung,
 Fame's garland faded from my brows,
 Her wreath away I flung.
 I sought, I saw, I heard but thee ;
 For what to love was victory ? ”

It will be admitted that there is an intensity of mood about these verses in which a shrewd critic might have discovered the potentiality of future greatness. It is an easy thing to be wise after the event, and no great penetration is required to find out the evidences of promise with the finger-post of performance to guide us. Only a poet could have described the rising of the sun in Egypt in such a passage as this :—

“ The first glitter of his rising beam
 Falls on the broad-based pyramids sublime ” ;

and the lines “ On a Dead Enemy ” contain a thought which, however crudely expressed, indicates a deeper vein of reflection than is common with lads :—

“ I came in haste with cursing breath
 And heart of hardest steel ;
 But when I saw thee cold in death,
 I felt as man should feel.

“ For when I look upon that face,
 That cold, unheeding, frigid brow,
 Where neither rage nor fear has place,
 By heaven ! I cannot hate thee now.”

Still, the recognition of some poetical quality in these poems does not justify the reader of the present day in sneering at the want of prescience in the critics of half a century ago. There was not in “ Poems by Two Brothers,” any more than in Byron's “ Hours of Idleness,” that golden wealth of promise which augured the presence of a heaven-born genius. Lord Tennyson wisely declined during his lifetime to rescue

these schoolboy efforts from the oblivion into which they have passed, except so far as the book-collectors are concerned: and the taste of an American publisher in including them in an edition of the Laureate's works is not to be commended. The "Poems," when published, caused no stir in the literary world. The sale, it may be judged, was confined to the friends of the young authors in their native county, and the world in general was altogether unconscious of the fact that a new poet had arisen whose works were destined to shed lustre on the literature of the Victoria era.

CHAPTER II.

IN the year 1828, Charles and Alfred Tennyson went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where their elder brother Frederick—who had been "Captain" of Eton, and the most celebrated Latin and Greek verse-maker of the school—was already a student of one or two years' standing, and had just gained the prize for the university Greek poem. Tennyson's rooms were over the entrance of the college gateway. His son Lionel afterwards occupied the same rooms. The influences of university life are, whether for good or evil, fraught with momentous consequences to youths of imaginative and highly strung temperament. College days are a character-making epoch in a man's life. From the little humdrum town of Louth, with its dull provincialism, to Cambridge, with its keen intellectual activities, was one of those sudden changes that could not fail to make its imprint on the minds of the two Lincolnshire lads. The leap from a bucolic environment to academic surroundings, with the strife of wits and the audacity of youthful speculation, was like one of those theatrical effects by which a snow-clad winter scene is suddenly changed into a bright and sunny landscape. The associations and friendships of this new sphere were destined to colour the whole of Alfred's after-life. On the day on which the poet entered Trinity College as an undergraduate, says Mr. Wemyss Reid, he saw a young

man whose face struck him so much, that he said to himself, "That is a man I should like to know: he looks the best-tempered fellow I ever saw." This was Richard Monckton Milnes. They spoke to each other, and from that time forward they were friends. "He always put you in a good humour," were Tennyson's own words, many years after, when the subject of them was no longer in the land of the living.

Cambridge had an expanding and maturing influence on an intellect already characterized by a vigour of inquiry and a comprehensive receptivity of new ideas rare in one so young. Tennyson was brought into contact with vigorous, thoughtful minds, and the friction took off the edges of his crudeness and inexperience. He found himself, with a reputation for intellectual promise, in a centre of modern culture and mental activity, and the result could not but be stimulating in the highest degree. Happily, it was his lot to fall among young men of his own age who were imbued with kindred tastes. A penetrating judgment of character enabled him to choose exactly the right sort of friends. He was not many months in residence before he became one of a circle of gifted and high-principled youths, most of whom came to the front in later life. These were days of keen bright wit, of eager disputation, of speculative thought, of bold fancy, of a sweet graciousness of life tinctured with the sentiments of chivalrous and noble manhood. The companions of Tennyson's undergraduate days included such men as Trench, Monckton Milnes, George Venables, James Spedding, W. H. Brookfield, and Kinglake. But there is one figure that towers above all of them in the reach of his influence upon Tennyson's character, namely, that of Arthur Henry Hallam. It is indispensable that we should pause a moment in the narrative, to give a silhouette of the man who, dying when he was only in his twenty-third year, was yet deemed worthy of that long-pondered "In Memoriam" which, seventeen years afterwards, surprised the literary world.

Hallam, who entered at the same college as Tennyson in

the same year, was born in London, in February 1811. He was the son of the well-known historian, and early in childhood gave promise of precocious intellectual powers. The "Memoir" written by his father reveals to us a boy of rare quickness of perception and an affectionate sweetness of disposition. The studies in which he was interested became a veritable child's-play to him. French and Latin were mastered with ease, and his aptitude for modern tongues was encouraged by a visit to Italy and Switzerland when he was seven years old. A year or two later he was throwing all his little soul into the composition of tragedies, most remarkable in their range of feeling when his inexperienced age is remembered. At Eton, where he was educated, his tastes led him to devote more time to Shakespeare, Byron, Wordsworth, and Shelley than to the subjects by which scholarship is conservatively attested in the ancient foundations of learning. To the particular spell of each of these poets in turn he submitted his rapidly developing intelligence, saturating his mind with their spirit, and storing it with great thoughts and beautiful ideas. On leaving Eton he again went to Italy before going to the university, drank a new inspiration from Dante and Petrarch in their native tongue, feasted his soul with art, and grafted on to the insular vogue an experience of the passionate South, with its richness of colouring and its melody of song.

With such a training, Arthur Hallam, when he went to Cambridge in 1828, although not eighteen, was already ripe in culture, and sage for his years. But there, again, the same desultory methods, accentuated by a weak condition of health, hindered his progress in the direction most appreciated by college dons. Mathematics found him a cold, indifferent suitor, and Greek and Latin composition were neglected for French literature and studies in the history of thought. His chief distinctions at Cambridge were a prize for English declamation, highly spoken of, and bringing him into some academic prominence, and another for an essay on Cicero. But the measure of the young man's mind was not to be

taken by these and similar regulation tests. If one wants a true idea of his intellectual grasp, is it not furnished in Tennyson's monumental elegy?

"Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye
That saw through all the Muses' walk;

"Seraphic intellect and force
To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassioned logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

"High nature amorous of the good,
But touched with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Through all the years of April blood;

"A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;

"And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unasked, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face.

* * * *

"Thy converse drew us with delight,
The men of rathe and riper years:
The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

"On thee the loyal-hearted hung,
The proud was half disarmed of pride,
Nor cared the serpent at thy side
To flicker with his double tongue.

"The stern were mild when thou wert by,
The flippant put himself to school
And heard thee, and the brazen fool
Was softened, and he knew not why."

Hallam's influence on Tennyson cannot very well be measured in words. After some months of more or less casual acquaintance, these two minds of fine texture discovered the intellectual affinity which was to weave them together in a more than brotherly affection. Seldom in these modern days has friendship of such rare fidelity been

encountered amid the troop of sham sentiments and insincere professions which do duty for the real thing. Both these young men had the poetic nature, the inquiring mind, the aspiration after a higher rule of conduct. No doubt they criticized each other's work with a kindly and sympathetic interest. For Alfred Tennyson did not neglect the muse in a too arduous pursuit of academic distinction. Both he and his brother tried their wings pretty often in the empyrean of song. Although it was not published until many years after, "The Lover's Tale" was written by the Laureate in the same year that he went to Cambridge. Its style, and especially some of its modes of expression, show that he was then under the influence of Shelley. The poem is certainly a remarkable work for a youth not out of his teens. Despite its occasional laboriousness of phrase, and the obscurities which betrayed the 'prentice-hand, it was distinguished by a free use of imagery and a luscious diction indicating the possession of very exceptional gifts, and gave, to those of his college friends who were permitted to see it, an earnest of the command of versification that he was later on to achieve.

They must have been halcyon days when these fine young spirits made festival together in the rooms of old Trinity. There was Brookfield, "Old Brooks" as they called him, a "man of humorous melancholy"—a "kindlier, trustier Jacques"—who in later life became a fashionable London preacher. Lord Tennyson has written of him in a sonnet which has all the tender pathos of a cherished regret:—

"How oft we two have heard St. Mary's chimes!
 How oft the Cantab supper, host and guest,
 Would echo helpless laughter to your jest!
 How oft with him we paced that walk of limes,
 Him, the lost light of those dawn-golden times."

Dr. Whewell, who in the days referred to was the tutor of Hallam and the Tennysons, has given us a vivid little glimpse of Brookfield's quality. "At my age," wrote the late Master of Trinity, "it is not likely that I shall ever see again a whole party lying on the floor for purposes of

unrestrained laughter, while one of their number is pouring forth, with a perfectly grave face, a succession of imaginary dialogues between characters real or fictitious, one exceeding another in humour or drollery. Brookfield almost lived with Arthur Hallam and the Tennysons, and, of course, with those who could afford time for their *noctes cænæque*."

John Mitchell Kemble was another of these college associates. Tennyson, in one of his early sonnets, predicted of him that he would become "a latter Luther, and a soldier-priest to scare Church-harpies from the Master's feast," and said that he was "spurred at heart with fiercest energy to embattail and to wall about his cause with iron-worded proof." Kemble did not fulfil these high-strung expectations as regards the Church, for being attracted by Anglo-Saxon studies, he abandoned the idea of a clerical life, and devoted his "fiercest energy" to early Northern literature. During the Spanish War of Independence, John Kemble was among the young men of generous impulse who went over to help the cause of liberty. "One day," writes Mrs. Ritchie, "a rumour came to distant Somersby that he was to be tried for his life by the Spanish authorities. No one else knew much about him except Alfred Tennyson, who started before dawn to drive across the country in search of some person of authority who knew the consul at Cadiz, and who could send letters of protection to the poor prisoner. It was a false alarm. John Kemble came home to make a name in other fields."

In the summer of 1829, Alfred Tennyson gained the Chancellor's gold medal for a poem on Timbuctoo. His friend Hallam was also one of the competitors. The latter's poem, which was subsequently printed in his "Remains," was written in the *terza rima* of Dante; that of Tennyson in blank verse. It was an unprecedented thing in those days for the prize to be awarded to a poem in blank verse, but the true poetic expression does not require the jingle of rhyme to commend itself even to university examiners. It was very likely the academic audacity of Tennyson's experiment that gave rise to an absurd story, long current, to the effect

that the prize fell to him by a blunder, a mark intended to express wonder being taken to denote approval! "Timbuctoo" contained many passages of glowing description and gorgeous colouring. The following vision of the city will suffice, by way of extract, to indicate the general style:—

"Then first within the South methought I saw
A wilderness of spires, and crystal pile
Of rampart upon rampart, dome on dome,
Illimitable range of battlement
On battlement, and the Imperial height
Of canopy o'ercanopied.

Behind
In diamond light upsprang the dazzling peaks
Of Pyramids, as far surpassing earth's
As heaven than earth is fairer. Each aloft
Upon his narrow eminence bore globes
Of wheeling suns, or stars, or semblances
Of either, showering circular abyss
Of radiance. But the glory of the place
Stood out a pillared front of burnished gold,
Interminably high, if gold it were
Or metal more ethereal, and, beneath,
Two doors of blinding brilliance, where no gaze
Might rest, stood open, and the eye could scan,
Through length of porch, and valve, and boundless hall,
Part of a throne of fiery flame," &c.

"i am glad," wrote A. H. Hallam to W. E. Gladstone, on Sept. 14, 1829, "you like my queer piece of work about Timbuctoo. I wrote it in a sovereign vein of poetic scorn for anybody's opinion who did not value Plato and Milton just as much as I did. The natural consequence was that ten people out of twelve laughed, or opened large eyes; and the other two set about praising highly. . . . My friend Tennyson's poem, which got the prize, will be thought by the ten sober persons aforementioned twice as absurd as mine: and to say the truth, by striking out his prose argument, the examiners have done all in their power to verify the concluding words, 'All was night.' The splendid imaginative power that pervades it will be seen through all hindrances. I consider Tennyson as promising fair to be the greatest poet of our generation, perhaps of our century."

The *Athenæum* of July 22, 1829, contained a highly eulogistic notice of this remarkable poem. "The age," says the critic, "has put forth poetry by a young man, and that where we should least expect it—namely, in a prize poem. These productions have often been ingenious and elegant, but we have never before seen one of them which indicated really first-rate poetical genius, and which would have done honour to any man that ever wrote. Such, we do not hesitate to affirm, is the little work before us; and the examiners seem to have felt it like ourselves, for they have assigned the prize to its author, though the measure in which he writes was never before, we believe, thus selected for honour." Probably this generous notice was the production of either John Sterling or F. D. Maurice, both of whom had left Cambridge a year or two before, and who were at this time joint editors of the *Athenæum*.

It is not a little remarkable that the subject of "Timbuctoo" should have brought out the early powers, although in very different directions, of two of the literary giants of the century. W. M. Thackeray—then a student in the same college as Tennyson, and on terms of intimacy which grew closer as the two men grew older, ripening at last into a friendship of the warmest kind—wrote some burlesque verses in a little periodical called the *Snob*, got up at Cambridge by the wags of the undergraduate world. He grimly asserts that they were "unluckily not finished on the day appointed for delivery of the several copies of verses on Timbuctoo," and, "as it would be a pity that such a poem should be lost to the world," they are submitted for insertion in the *Snob*, which is "the most widely circulated periodical in Europe."

Henry Alford, afterwards Dean of Canterbury, was another of the college chums with whom Tennyson preserved a life-long friendship. There are several entries in his journal relating to the Cambridge days of 1830, with allusions to the poems of the two brothers, and glimpses of the *noctes cænæque* in which he shared. In one of them we read, "Met Tennant, Hallam, Merivale, and the three

Tennysons, at Alfred Tennyson's rooms. The latter read some very exquisite poetry of his, entitled 'The Hesperides.'" Besides these informal meetings, where there was indeed the feast of reason and the flow of soul, there were the weekly gatherings of the "Apostles," a little society numbering twelve members who met for free discussion. It was of the "Apostles" that Tennyson wrote later on, in "In Memoriam," that they

"Held debate, a band
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
And labour, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land."

Alfred Tennyson, Hallam, Trench, Spedding, Alford, and Milnes were all members; and in spite of the disfavour with which these secret meetings were regarded by the authorities of those days, we may be certain that there was no stint of speculation or of free inquiry. At this period, indeed, the bent of Tennyson's mind towards metaphysical problems took a stronger form from the encouragement and example of Arthur Hallam. Like his friend, he supplemented the prevailing studies of the university with adventurous explorations into regions of speculative thought and free range over the fields of classic lore.

In 1830, Alfred Tennyson prefixed his name to a thin duodecimo of 154 pages, published by Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, and entitled "Poems, chiefly Lyrical." This little volume is now exceedingly rare, and commands a high price in the book-market. The influence of Hallam's culture had already made itself felt on the poet's work, although not to the extent that became subsequently apparent, and his sympathetic criticism no doubt left its improving mark upon these acknowledged productions of his friend, before they were ushered into the colder atmosphere of public consideration. The "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," were fifty-three in number; twenty-three have entirely disappeared from the later editions of the Laureate's works, and most of those which have been retained have

been touched and retouched, and pruned, altered, or expanded, until they may be regarded almost as new pieces. It was in this volume that the always favourite poems, "Lilian," "Isabel," "Mariana," "The Mer-man," "The Mermaid," "The Owl," "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," "Ode to Memory," "The Poet's Mind," "The Deserted House," "The Ballad of Oriana," "The Sea Fairies," "Nothing will die," "All things will die," and "The Dying Swan," first saw the light. Of the withdrawn pieces, several present characteristics which at least appeal to the instincts of curiosity. Regarding as something sacred the poet's right to bury the weaker productions of his youth, we shall not attempt to gratify that curiosity, or to disinter any of the suppressed works, except in the case of one or two detached passages, quoted for the purpose of illustrating contemporary criticisms. The longest, and in some respects the most important, of these early efforts was the "Supposed Confessions of a Sensitive Mind not in Unity with Itself," which was buried in a determined obscurity for many years, and only found a place in the complete edition of Lord Tennyson's "Poems" under the pressure of unauthorized publication in America. The *Westminster Review* spoke of this poem as an extraordinary combination of deep reflection, metaphysical analysis, picturesque description, dramatic transition, and strong emotion. Arthur Hallam considered that the "Confessions" were full of a deep insight into human nature, and into those particular trials which are sure to beset men who think and feel for themselves at this epoch of social development. Apart from the interest which invariably seems to attach to anything that a great author has shown a marked desire to cancel, this poem possesses a still greater interest because it is an attempt to handle those spiritual problems which, in "The Two Voices" and "In Memoriam," Tennyson has treated with such a deep knowledge of the soul's needs and yearnings. By the side of dainty little pieces like "Lilian" and "The Sea Fairies," the "Confessions" seem like the sea

lashed into convulsive movement compared with the placid surface of a summer lake. Arthur Hallam very shrewdly detected at the time that the mood portrayed in this poem was rather the clouded season of a strong mind, than the habitual condition of one feeble and "second-rate."

Although some of the lyrics in this volume may have justified Coleridge's remark that Tennyson began to write poetry before he knew what metre was, on the whole they filled competent judges with the hope that a new poet had arisen, delicate in fancy, rich in melody, and with powers of language worthy of a great artist in words. That hope was destined to fulfilment. It is interesting, with the fulfilment before us, to note the reception which this first acknowledged work met with at the hands of the critics. The functions of criticism, not always clearly apprehended by the periodical press, were even less understood in those days than they are now. There was a much greater proneness to the cutting and slashing style of review; favourable notice was often a mere question of coterie; discriminating judgments were less often to be met with than extravagant laudation on the one hand or malicious attack on the other. The earlier notices of the new poems were reasonably free from both these excesses. The *Westminster** summed up the quality of the volume thus: "That these poems will have a very rapid and extensive popularity we do not anticipate. Their very originality will prevent their being generally appreciated for a time. But that time will come, we hope, to a not far distant end. They demonstrate the possession of powers, to the future direction of which we look with some anxiety." After commenting upon Mr. Tennyson's dangerous facility of impersonation, "by which he entered so thoroughly into the most strange and wayward idiosyncrasies of other men," and trusting that this characteristic would not degrade him into a "political harlequin," the critic appealed to him to be true to his own conception of the poet's destiny, as expressed in the verses on "The Poet's Mind." "If," he says, "our estimate of

* *Westminster Review*, January, 1831.

Mr. Tennyson be correct, he too is a poet, and many years hence may read his juvenile description of that character with the proud consciousness that it has become the description and history of his own work." There was something of prophetic inspiration in that hopeful and encouraging passage. Lord Tennyson did live up to the ideal of those remote days. The "poet's mind" in his case was of a truth "holy ground," and it was his enviable portion to be

"Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love," and all that makes for truth and sweetness and light, in a world of shams and darkness.

Leigh Hunt wrote a favourable review* of the "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," comparing them with Charles Tennyson's "Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces," published about the same time. After a lengthy examination of the rival claims of the two brothers, he gave the palm to Alfred. The next important criticism in chronological order is one of great interest. It appeared in the *Englishman's Magazine* for August, 1831, and was written by Arthur Hallam. It is easy to perceive, in the general extracts which alone have been preserved in Hallam's "Remains," that the critic's perception of what was excellent in the poems was touched with a fine friendship. His judgment was imbued with the loving partiality of a warm admirer. He praised in largesse because he had a sincere conviction, founded on a comprehensive knowledge and an elegant taste, that his friend's work had the real ring of true poetry. His enthusiasm was of that pardonable and even noble kind which scorns to look for faults where there is much to delight in. The following passages may be accepted as the keynote of the whole article. "One of the faithful Islâm, a poet in the truest and highest sense, we are anxious to present to our readers. He has yet written little and published less; but in these 'preludes of a loftier strain' we recognize the inspiring God. Mr. Tennyson belongs

* *The Tatler*, 1831.

decidedly to the class we have already described as Poets of Sensation. He sees all the forms of nature with the 'eruditus oculus,' and his ear has a fairy fineness. There is a strange earnestness in his worship of beauty which throws a charm over his impassioned song, more easily felt than described, and not to be escaped by those who have once felt it. We think he has more definiteness and roundness of general conception than the late Mr. Keats, and is much more free from blemishes of diction and hasty capriccios of fancy. He has also this advantage over that poet and his friend Shelley, that he comes before the public unconnected with any political party or peculiar system of opinions. Nevertheless, true to the theory we have stated, we believe his participation in their characteristic excellences is sufficient to secure him a share of their unpopularity. The volume of 'Poems, chiefly Lyrical,' does not contain above one hundred and fifty-four pages; but it shows us much more of the character of its parent mind than many books we have known of much larger compass and more boastful pretensions. The features of original genius are clearly and strongly marked. The author imitates nobody; we recognize the spirit of his age, but not the individual form of this or that writer. His thoughts bear no more resemblance to Byron or Scott, Shelley or Coleridge, than to Homer or Calderon, Ferdúsi or Calidasa. We have remarked five distinctive excellences of his own manner. First, his luxuriance of imagination, and, at the same time, his control over it. Secondly, his power of embodying himself in ideal characters, or rather moods of character, with such extreme accuracy of adjustment, that the circumstances of the narrative seem to have a natural correspondence with the predominant feeling, and, as it were, to be evolved from it by assimilative force. Thirdly, his vivid, picturesque delineation of objects, and the peculiar skill with which he holds all of them *fused*, to borrow a metaphor from science, in a medium of strong emotion. Fourthly, the variety of his lyrical measures, and exquisite modulation of harmonious

words and cadences to the swell and fall of the feelings expressed. Fifthly, the elevated habits of thought, implied in these compositions, and importing a mellow soberness of tone, more impressive, to our minds, than if the author had drawn up a set of opinions in verse, and sought to instruct the understanding rather than to communicate the love of beauty to the heart."

Tennyson could not have been otherwise than gratified by this eloquent tribute to his genius. Some of these earlier critiques have been found fault with on the score of what is described as injudicious applause. The persons who make these complaints are forgetful of the Carlylean dictum, that it is "a much shallower and more ignoble occupation to detect faults than to discover beauties." The poems, it may be conceded, were not faultless. Years after, the poet himself spoke of the songs he made

"As half but idle brawling rhymes,
The sport of random sun and shade."

The withdrawal of many of them from his collected works is evidence that, when his own critical taste grew finer, he rejected as crude a good deal that his immature judgment had sanctioned.

But if the note of eulogy struck by his friend Hallam was pitched in a key which justified apprehensions that the subject of it might be spoilt, he had not to wait long for a corrective. There was at least one professor of the art of criticism who thought that too honeyed praise might prove, by a glossing over of conspicuous faults, more harmful than the hostility of an adverse judgment. "Christopher North" was at that time in the heyday of his reputation. He was a man of some parts, but posterity has not by any means confirmed the contemporary estimate of his critical powers. A certain brutal way of hard-hitting (*vide* what he said of Keats), with which he expressed his literary judgments, made them dreaded by sensitive persons, but considering that brutality in criticism was then the vogue, Wilson cannot be pronounced worse than the rest of the "ungentle craft." It is but fair to admit that his notorious review of Tennyson's

first poems* was not altogether unfavourable. It was what would in those days have been considered a judicious mixture of praise and blame—an administration of chastisement tempered with some complimentary remarks to the scourged victim. In the February number of *Blackwood*, Wilson had said of the new poet, “He has a fine ear for melody, and harmony too, and rare and rich glimpses of imagination; he has genius. I admire Alfred, and hope, nay trust, that one day he will prove himself a poet. If he do not, then I am no prophet.” Had this stood alone, it would have been all the better for the professor’s reputation. In the subsequent article, however, he dealt out condemnation so freely that the modicum of praise was well-nigh lost sight of. In his protest against the panegyric of Tennyson’s admirers, the Scotch Daniel fell into a tone of arrogance and scorn which sadly marred his judgment. The chastisement of the young poet was unnecessarily severe, and the ridicule in some places was so savage, that the reader is forced to the conclusion that the critic felt a truculent delight in the use of his literary cudgel. After a mocking introduction, to the effect that almost all people are poets, except those who write verses, he proceeds:—

“One of the saddest misfortunes that can befall a young poet is to be the Pet of a Coterie; and the very saddest of all, if in Cockneydom. Such has been the unlucky lot of Alfred Tennyson. He has been elevated to the throne of Little Britain, and sonnets were showered over his coronation from the most remote regions of his empire, even from Hampstead Hill. The besetting sin of all periodical criticism, and nowadays there is no other, is boundless extravagance of praise; but none splash it on like the trowel-men who have been bedaubing Mr. Tennyson. The worst of it is, that they make the Bespattered not only feel but look ridiculous; he seems as absurd as an Image in a tea-garden; and, bedizened with faded and fantastic garlands, the public cough on being told he is a Poet, for he has much more the appearance of a Post. The *English-*

* *Blackwood’s Magazine*, May 1832.

man's Magazine ought not to have died; for it threatened to be a very pleasant periodical. An essay 'On the Genius of Alfred Tennyson' sent it to the grave. The superhuman—nay, supernatural—pomposity of that one paper incapacitated the whole work for living one day longer in this unceremonious world. The solemnity with which the critic approached the subject of his adoration, and the sanctity with which he laid his offerings on the shrine, were too much for our religious age. The essay 'On the Genius of Alfred Tennyson' awoke a general guffaw, and it expired in convulsions. . . . But the Old Man must see justice done to this ingenious lad, and save him from his worst enemies, his friends. Were we not afraid that our style might be thought to wax too figurative, we should say that Alfred is a promising plant; and that the day may come when, beneath sun and shower, his genius may grow up and expand into a stately tree, embowering a solemn shade within its wide circumference, while the daylight lies gorgeously on its crest; seen from afar in glory—itself a grove. But that day will never come, if he hearken not to our advice, and, as far as his own nature will permit, regulate by it the movements of his genius. At present he has small power over the common feelings and thoughts of men. His feebleness is distressing at all times when he makes an appeal to their ordinary sympathies. And the reason is, that he fears to look such sympathies boldly in the face, and will be—metaphysical."

The professor then proceeds to an examination of particular poems. The "English War Song" is pronounced "miserable indeed"; "We are Free," drivel; "Lost Hope," more dismal drivel; "Love, Pride, and Forgetfulness," even more dismal drivel; "The Poet's Mind," most of it silly, some of it prettyish, scarcely one line of it all true poetry; "The How and the Why," from beginning to end a clumsy and unwieldy failure, showing no fancy in the region of metaphysics; "The Merman," after all but a sorry affair; "The Grasshopper," conceived and executed in the spirit of the celebrated imitation by Dr. Johnson—

"Dilly-dilly duckling, Come and be killed"; and concerning "The Owl," it is remarked that "Alfred is the greatest owl; all he wants is to be shot, stuffed, and stuck in a glass case, to be made immortal in a museum."

All this is very vulgar stuff. There is nothing to be gained, unless an author is so bad as to deserve crushing out of existence, by this brutal frankness of condemnation. Wilson's great sin lay, not so much in finding fault with particular poems, as in his manner of doing it. That there was some basis for his verdict seems to be proved by the circumstance that all the condemned pieces, except "The Poet's Mind" and "The Merman," have been suppressed. Lest it be said that this account of Wilson's critique is partial, the following passage must be quoted:—

"Thin as is this little volume, 'twould yet be easy to extract from it much more unmeaningness; but having shown by gentle chastisement that we love Alfred Tennyson, let us now show by judicious eulogy that we admire him, and, by well-chosen specimens of his fine faculties, that he is worthy of our admiration. Perhaps, in the first part of our article, we may have exaggerated Mr. Tennyson's not unfrequent silliness, but we feel assured that in the second part we have not exaggerated his strength—that we have done no more than justice to his fine faculties—and that the millions who delight in *Maga* will, with one voice, confirm our judgment—that Alfred Tennyson is a poet."

Among the poems thus selected for praise are "The Ode to Memory," "The Deserted House," "A Dirge," "Isabel," "Mariana," "Adeline," "The Sleeping Beauty," "The Ballad of Oriana," and "Recollections of the Arabian Nights." All these have been retained, with more or less emendation, in the collected works. It may reasonably be inferred that, although the poet was annoyed at the needlessly severe way in which he had been handled, he was not too proud to recognize that there was a basis of justice in what the critic had said. This article of Wilson's provoked Mr. Tennyson into the following retort:—

" You did late review my lays,
 Crusty Christopher ;
 You did mingle blame and praise,
 Rusty Christopher.
 When I learnt from whom it came,
 I forgave you all the blame,
 Musty Christopher ;
 I could *not* forgive the praise,
 Fusty Christopher."

Probably the poet afterwards concluded that this little *jeu d'esprit* was not worthy of a permanent place in his works ; or he may have thought it unbecoming to keep on record an ungente word on an adversary long gone to his account ; at any rate, it no longer appears among his poems. Considering that it is the only instance in which Lord Tennyson turned, even in banter, upon his critics (the " New Timon " excepted), and that he had much to endure at the hands of dull, ignorant, or malevolent criticism, it cannot be charged against him that he was of a vindictive nature. The little ' chaffing ' verses to " Christopher " are honey by the side of Byron's savage onslaught on the Scotch Reviewers, or Churchill's equally savage " Apology."

CHAPTER III.

IN the same year that witnessed the production of " Poems, chiefly Lyrical," Tennyson had the misfortune to lose his father. Although the rector of Somersby is said to have been a somewhat stern man, he was revered by his son Alfred, who owed to him the strong rule of a guiding hand in the perilous years of boyhood, and whose grief, springing from a remembrance of unnumbered acts of love, was surely not lessened by the circumstance that he had as yet been able to do but little towards making repayment for much parental sacrifice. Dr. Tennyson's remains were laid at rest in Somersby churchyard, where the worn inscription on his gravestone is still to be deciphered. Two years later, this sad occasion was referred to by the poet in some verses to James Spedding, condoling with him on a brother's death :—

“Once through mine own doors Death did pass ;
One went, who never hath returned.

“He will not smile—not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chair is seen
Empty before us. That was he
Without whose life I had not been.”

After her husband's death, Mrs. Tennyson still lived on with her children for some time at the rectory, which he had enlarged and made suitable for his numerous family. In that sweet old home, rich in the graciousness of happy memories, surrounded with her girls ripening into womanhood, and her boys standing, as it were, at the portals of that life of action and responsibility which so often cuts the sons of a family adrift from the parental moorings, the widowed mother led for a few years a sequestered and gravely happy life.

Tennyson's friendship for Hallam was strengthened by the circumstance that the latter became engaged to a sister of his, Miss Emily Tennyson. Part of Hallam's vacations were spent at Somersby, where all was gaiety and joyousness under the brightening influence of love's young dream.

There are a couple of passages in Archbishop Trench's Memorials which give an insight into the relations existing between Hallam and Tennyson. They are both extracts from letters written by Hallam to Trench. In March, 1832, he says: “I regret with you that you have never had the opportunity of knowing more of him (Tennyson). His nervous temperament and habits of solitude give an appearance of affectation to his manner, which is no true interpreter of the man, and wears off on further knowledge. Perhaps you could never become very intimate, for certainly your bents of mind are not the same, and at some points they intersect; yet I think you could hardly fail to see much for love, as well as for admiration. I have persuaded him, I think, to publish without further delay. There is written the amount of a volume, rather larger than the former, and certainly, unless the usual illusion of manu-

script deceives me, more free from blemishes and more masterly in power."

Of about the same date is the second extract: "I am now at Somersby, not only as the friend of Alfred Tennyson, but as a lover of his sister. An attachment on my part of near two years' standing, and a mutual engagement of one year, are, I fervently hope, only the commencement of a union which circumstances may not impair, and the grave itself not conclude. My father imposed a very unpleasant but a very natural prohibition not to come here till of age, so that it is but just now that I have been able to reap in actual enjoyment of her society any fruits of that assurance which a year since poured a flood of hope on a mind much depressed and benighted."

The poet, with idyllic touch, has pictured to us the innocent happiness of those long-ago *réunions* :—

" O bliss, when, all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn :

" Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon."

In connection with these sweet gleams of happiness, so soon to be shivered by the stroke of a great calamity, a touching interest attaches to a sonnet of most delicate fancy written by Arthur Hallam to his betrothed when he began to teach her Italian :—

" Lady, I bid thee to a sunny dome,
Ringing with echoes of Italian song ;
Henceforth to thee these magic halls belong,
And all the pleasant place is like a home.
Hark, on the right, with full piano tone,
Old Dante's voice encircles all the air ;
Hark yet again, like flute-tones mingling rare
Comes the keen sweetness of Petrarca's moan.
Pass thou the lintel freely ; without fear
Feast on the music. I do better know thee

Than to suspect this pleasure thou dost owe me
 Will wrong thy gentle spirit, or make less dear
 That element whence thou must draw thy life—
 An English maiden and an English wife.” *

“Once in their early youth,” says Mrs. Ritchie, “we hear of the two friends, Tennyson and Hallam, travelling in the Pyrenees. These two were taking money, and letters written in invisible ink, to certain conspirators who were then revolting against the intolerable tyranny of Ferdinand, and who were chiefly hiding in the Pyrenees. The young men met, among others, a Señor Ojeda, who confided to Alfred his intentions, which were, to *couper la gorge à tous les curés*. Señor Ojeda could not talk English or fully explain all his aspirations. ‘Mais vous connaissez mon cœur,’ said he, effusively. ‘And a pretty black one it is,’ thought the poet. I have heard Alfred described in those days as ‘straight and with a broad chest,’ and when he had crossed over from the continent and was coming back, walking through Wales, he went one day into a little wayside inn, where an old man sat by the fire, who looked up, and asked many questions. ‘Are you from the army? Not from the army! Then where do you come from?’ said the old man. ‘I am just come from the Pyrenees,’ said Alfred. ‘Ah, I knew there was a something,’ said the wise old man.” The briefest possible reference to this pedestrian tour occurs in “In Memoriam,” where the poet speaks of “the Past in which we went through summer France.”

“Straight and with a broad chest.” Tennyson’s frame had already expanded according to the promise of his boyhood, and he stood in stature, as in intellect, tall among his fellows at Cambridge. One who knew him well in those days has left a description that is vouched for by surviving contemporaries: “A man at all points of grand proportion and feature, significant of that inward chivalry becoming his ancient and honourable race; when himself a ‘yonge

* Miss Emily Tennyson eventually married Captain Jesse, a naval officer. It is a highly creditable trait in the character of Mr. Hallam, senior, that, for some years after her marriage, he made her a liberal allowance.

squire,' like him in Chaucer, 'of grete strengthe,' that could hurl the crowbar farther than any of the neighbouring clowns, whose humours, as well as of their betters—knight, squire, landlord, and lieutenant—he took quiet note of, like Chaucer himself."* His fine physical proportions and strength were an inheritance from his father. In his case, too, the soul was worthy of its bodily framework. Arthur Hallam, swift and sure in judgment, wrote of his friend as—

"A being full of clearest insight,
 whose fame
Is couching now with panther eyes intent,
As who shall say, 'I'll spring to him anon,
And have him for my own.'"

Tennyson's intellectual grasp and the unique force of his character were felt by every one with whom he came in contact. The originality of genius sometimes wastes itself in eccentricity, and poets, especially in their youth and early manhood, are fond of encouraging affectations which impair their influence. Tennyson's moral fibre was too tough for such devices to obtain notoriety. That he was punctilious in his observance of academical regulations may be doubted. A Cambridge contemporary of his has recalled the fact that Whewell, his tutor, "who was a man himself, and who knew a man when he saw him," used to pass over in Alfred Tennyson certain informalities and forgetfulness of combinations as to gowns, and places, and times, which in another he would never have overlooked.

The growing reputation of his poetry may be measured by the circumstance that the editors of the annuals and miscellanies were glad to get hold of it. The *Gem*, for 1831, contained three of his poems, in one of which, entitled "No More," may be traced the germ of Violet's song in "The Princess." The *Englishman's Magazine*, the *Yorkshire Literary Annual*, and *Friendship's Offering*, in that and the following year, also published sonnets by the future Laureate.

* Edward Fitzgerald (translator of "Omar Khayyam").

In the winter of 1832 appeared Tennyson's second volume, published by Mr. Edward Moxon, and dated 1833. It contained only thirty pieces, and of these a dozen have since been suppressed by their fastidious author, while many of the others have undergone such large alterations that they may almost be said to have been rewritten. It was in this volume that "The Lady of Shalott," "The Miller's Daughter," "Ænone," "The Palace of Art," "The May Queen," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "A Dream of Fair Women," all established favourites and dear to every lover of English poetry, first appeared. The suppressed pieces include three or four sonnets, "The Hesperides," a couple of songs, the verse to "Christopher North" already referred to, and a little poem, "O Darling Room!" which was not altogether unjustly complained of as unworthy of Tennyson's powers. This volume marked a distinct and striking advance. The poet, to use a phrase borrowed from the oratory of politics, was "progressing by leaps and bounds." He was feeling his way successfully into a simpler style, a more melodious versification, a broader range of feeling. It was still objected by some of the critics that there was too much of the "drawing-room" about his poetry, too much that was suggestive of the *Keepsake* and *Friendship's Offering*. M. Taine has expressed something of the spirit in which these earlier works were regarded by many of Tennyson's own countrymen, during that dubious period when uncertainty prevailed as to his ultimate place in literature: "He caressed all things so carefully that his verses appeared at times far-fetched, affected, almost euphuistic. He gave them too much adornment and polishing; he seemed like an epicurean in style, as well as in beauty. He looked for pretty rustic scenes, touching remembrances, curious or pure sentiments. He made them into elegies, pastorals, idyls."

No doubt, in such a poem as "O Darling Room!" Tennyson to some extent justified those who were already eager to scoff at his pretensions. It would be unfair to allude to bits of sentimentalism like this, if it were not

necessary to explain the hostility with which a certain school of robust critics attacked the poet during a number of years. But in "The May Queen," "The Miller's Daughter," "The Palace of Art," and "A Dream of Fair Women," even as they originally stood in the 1833 volume, he displayed a high range of lyrical power, and a beauty of word-painting, that immediately enlisted the enthusiastic suffrages of the far-seeing. A truly critical judgment could not have hesitated for a moment to pronounce that here was much that was exceeding good. The touch was firmer, the music was sweeter, the inspirations of Nature were more frequent than those of mysticism or metaphysics. The revision which most of these poems have subsequently undergone shows that their author's own judgment matured to a recognition of their faults. One or two samples may be given of the minute processes of correction to which the poems have at various times been subjected. In "The Miller's Daughter," the verse which now reads—

"I loved the brimming wave that swam
Through quiet meadows round the mill,
The sleepy pool above the dam,
The pool beneath it never still,"

ran thus in the 1833 edition—

"How dear to me in youth, my love,
Was everything about the mill,
The black and silent pool above,
The pool beneath that ne'er stood still."

Again, in 1833, we read—

"('Twas April then) I came and lay
Beneath those gummy chestnut buds
That glistened in the April blue."

Now the passage is—

"('Twas April then), I came and sat
Below the chestnuts, when their buds
Were glistening to the breezy blue."

In the same way, the passage—

"A water-rat from off the bank
Plunged in the stream,"

has given place to the more poetical touch of a leaping trout. A more notable instance, perhaps, is furnished in "A Dream of Fair Women." One of the stanzas originally ran thus, and was sharply criticized for the too realistic character of the third line :

"The tall masts quivered as they lay afloat,
The temples and the people and the shore ;
One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat
Slowly,—and nothing more."

For nearly thirty years the verse stood so, but in 1860 the poet, without sacrificing any of its force, added greatly to its form by the following changes :—

"The high masts flickered as they lay afloat ;
The crowds, the temples wavered, and the shore ;
The bright death quivered at the victim's throat ;
Touched ; and I knew no more."

A careful comparison of the first edition of most of these poems with their present shape will show with what scrupulous care Lord Tennyson elaborated, and modified, and altered. With him it was a principle that there is no finality in art. Some of his admirers, indeed, have cried out against his over-refining tendency, and now and then he experienced a twinge of compunction with his own love of perfecting, and admitted his disposition to

"Add and alter, many times,
Till all be ripe and rotten."

But it is unnecessary, in a biographical narrative, to pursue these emendations at greater length. Enough has been said to let it be clearly understood that the criticisms which soon followed the publication of the 1833 volume related to pieces different, in some particulars of detail, from the form in which we now know them. Nevertheless, even this understanding does not extenuate the dull and malignant asperity of a notice of the little book which, in July 1833, appeared in the *Quarterly Review*—known in those days, and rightly known, as "the hang, draw, and Quarterly." It is believed that Lockhart, the editor, wrote this article. Whoever the author may have been, he acted

up to the character of the *Review*. The same caustic selection of faults, to the exclusion of any generous or even just recognition of excellence, distinguished the article as was exhibited in the *Quarterly's* vicious attack on Keats's "Endymion." One almost needs to apologize for quoting a single sentence from the insulting review, but, in the light of Lord Tennyson's later fame, there is some amusement to be got by unearthing these forgotten diatribes. The reviewer talks in a laboriously ironical strain about introducing "to the admiration of our more sequestered readers a new prodigy of genius—another and a brighter star of that galaxy or *milky way* of poetry of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger." Then he proceeds, through fifteen pages of banter, to ridicule every passage that suggested material for his scathing humour. Quoting this verse—

"Sweet as the noise, in parchèd plains,
Of bubbling wells that fret the stones
(If any sense in me remains),
Thy words will be—thy cheerful tones
As welcome to my crumbling bones,"—

he fastens on the words, "If any sense in me remains." "This doubt," he says, "is inconsistent with the opening stanza of the piece, and, in fact, too modest; we take upon ourselves to reassure Mr. Tennyson that, even after he shall be dead and buried, as much 'sense' will still remain as he has now the good fortune to possess." In this fashion did the *Quarterly* of half a century ago discharge the high functions of criticism. Are we not justified in applying to the so-called critic Shelley's fine figure, and describing him as "a noteless blot on a remembered name"?

But if Lord Tennyson, in those struggling days, had ill-natured critics, he had also kind and encouraging ones. S. T. Coleridge, while finding some fault, did it graciously, and with that fine benevolence which characterized his contemporary judgments. He complained of the difficulty of scanning some of the verses, and advised a strict course of discipline in the simpler forms of metre. John Sterling,

Allan Cunningham, and John Stuart Mill bore helpful testimony to the rich and rare promise of Tennyson's muse. The feeling rapidly gained ground that, in spite of some verbal conceits, occasional crudities of rhythm, and metaphors that sometimes produced a jarring effect, an eminently English poet had arisen, capable, when he should have pruned away the wild growths of youth, of rising to the loftiest themes in the most melodious verse.

But a great shadow was coming to sober in affliction the fancy of the poet, and to chasten his soul with a memorable sadness. Arthur Hallam, to whose thread in the interest of our narrative it becomes needful to revert, took his degree and quitted Cambridge in 1832, and went to live with his father at 67 Wimpole Street—"the dark house in the long unlovely street"—the number of which he was wont to jocularly impress upon his friends by telling them that he would always be found "at sixes and sevens." Intended for the law, he was entered at the Inner Temple, and put to read with an eminent conveyancer. An intellect like his would have grappled easily enough with the entanglements and confusions of the great legal puzzle. One who could master a difficult work by Descartes at a single sitting, could have applied himself with some prospect of signal success to the niceties of forensic discussion. What he would have accomplished had he not been struck down in the very flower of his early manhood, no one can say. The dawn gave rich promise of a golden day, and many hopes centred in this "rose and expectancy" of his father's house. His health, which had been uncertain at Cambridge through the fault of an irregular circulation, seemed at this time to have mended, and he was strong enough to do considerable work in the way of translations and memoirs which evinced a remarkable insight into the springs of human action. But all this brilliancy of promise was to be roughly destroyed. In the autumn of 1833 he accompanied his father on a continental tour. While at Vienna, in the month of September, he was seized with a slight fever, from which nothing serious was apprehended. His father

went out, and on his return found him lying, as he supposed, asleep on a couch. He was asleep, but it was the sleep of death. A sudden determination of blood to the head—his old disorder—caused by a weak action of the heart, had over-charged the cerebral vessels, and death must have been instantaneous:

“God’s finger touched him, and he slept.”

“Those whose eyes must long be dim with tears,” wrote his bereaved father, “brought him home to rest among his kindred and in his own country.” They buried him in the chancel of Clevedon Church, on a hill overlooking the tawny waters of the Bristol Channel, where “the stately ship sails on to its haven under the hill.” More than half a century has passed since they laid him there to rest, cut off so ruthlessly in the glory of his opening day; yet a sympathetic interest is still felt in the record of his brief life, and always will be felt as long as people shall read the noble requiem of his gifted friend.*

* The tablet in the south transept of Clevedon Church reads as follows :—

“TO THE MEMORY OF
ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM,
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, B.A.,
ELDEST SON OF HENRY HALLAM, ESQUIRE,
AND OF JULIA MARIA, HIS WIFE,
DAUGHTER OF SIR ABRAHAM ELTON, BART.,
OF CLEVEDON COURT,
WHO WAS SNATCHED AWAY BY SUDDEN DEATH,
AT VIENNA, ON SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1833,
IN THE 23RD YEAR OF HIS AGE.
AND NOW IN THIS OBSCURE AND SOLITARY
CHURCH
REPOSE THE MORTAL REMAINS OF
ONE TOO EARLY LOST FOR PUBLIC FAME,
BUT ALREADY CONSPICUOUS AMONG HIS
CONTEMPORARIES
FOR THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GENIUS,
THE DEPTH OF HIS UNDERSTANDING,
THE NOBLENESSE OF HIS DISPOSITION,
THE FERVOUR OF HIS PIETY,
AND THE PURITY OF HIS LIFE.

*Vale dulcissime,
vale dilectissime, desideratissime,
requiescas in pace.
Pater ac mater hic posthac requiescamus tecum,
usque ad tubam.”*

Abundant testimony was forthcoming, from other contemporaries besides Tennyson, to the rare and special quality of the life thus cut short, through some inscrutable purpose of Providence, on the very threshold of its larger scope. His college friend, Alford, thus wrote of Hallam, when the impress of his influence was yet fresh :—

“ Gentle soul,
That ever moved among us in a veil
Of heavenly lustre ; in whose presence thoughts
Of common import shone with light divine,
Whence we drew sweetness as from out a well
Of honey pure and deep ; thine early form
Was not the investiture of daily men,
But thou didst wear a glory in thy look
From inward converse with the spirit of love ;
And thou hadst won in the first strife of youth
Trophies that gladdened hope, and pointed on
To days when we should stand and minister
To the full triumphs of thy gathered strength.”

Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) spoke of him as “ not only a beloved friend, a delightful companion, but a most wise and influential counsellor in all the serious concerns of existence, an incomparable critic in all our literary efforts.” Mr. Gladstone, who was his schoolfellow at Eton, wrote of him thus : “ He is well known to have been one who, if the term of his days had been prolonged, would have needed no aid from a friendly hand, would have built his own enduring monument, and would have bequeathed to his country a name in all likelihood greater than that of his very distinguished father.” And that father, with all a father’s pardonable pride, has put it on record that Arthur’s premature abilities were not more conspicuous than an almost faultless disposition, sustained by a more calm self-command than has often been witnessed in this season of life. Lord Tennyson, from whose memory the long roll of years never effaced the remembrance of his dead friend, spoke of him to intimate friends, within a comparatively recent period, as having been “ as near perfection as a mortal man can be.”

Towards the close of 1833, Monckton Milnes wrote to Tennyson on the subject of his “ Impressions of Greece,”

which he was about to bring out, and received the following letter in reply :—

“ *December 3, 1833.*

“ MY DEAR MILNES,

“ A letter from you was like a message from the land of shadows. It is so long since I have looked upon and conversed with you, that I will not deny but that you had withdrawn a little into the twilight. Yet you do me a wrong in supposing that I have forgotten you. I shall not easily forget you, for you have that about you which one remembers with pleasure. I am rejoiced to hear that you intend to present us with your Grecian impressions. Your gay and airy mind must have caught as many colours from the landskip you moved through as a flying soap-bubble—a comparison truly somewhat irreverent, yet I meant it not as such; though I care not if you take it in an evil sense, for is it not owed to you for your three years’ silence to me whom you professed to love and care for? And in the second place, for your expression, ‘clearing one’s mind of Greek thoughts and Greek feelings to make way for something better.’ It is a sad thing to have a dirty mind full of Greek thoughts and feelings. What an Augean it must have been before the Greek thoughts got there! To be done with this idle banter, I hope that in your book you have given us much glowing description and little mysticism. I know that you can describe richly and vividly. Give orders to Moxon, and he will take care that the volume is conveyed to me.

“ Believe me, dear Richard,

“ Ever thine,

“ A. T.

“ P.S.—Charles and Frederick are neither of them here, so that I am forced to cover their remembrances to you.”

CHAPTER IV.

TENNYSON, like Thackeray, left Cambridge without taking a degree. It may be conjectured that the consciousness of credentials surpassing those bestowed by any academical distinction made him indifferent to the honours of the schools. His intention, we may reasonably suppose, was already resolute to make literature the real business of his life. Knowing the measure of his own powers, and feeling within him the capability of accomplishing better things, he now suspended for a while the publication of new pieces, and allowed his fruit to ripen thoroughly before gathering it. The death of Hallam will account but very partially for this long withdrawal from the public arena. With the exception of "The Lover's Tale," privately printed and speedily suppressed, and a couple of lyrics in miscellaneous collections, nothing of his was issued from the press between the 1833 "Poems" and a revised and enlarged edition in 1842. These exceptions may be speedily dismissed. "The Lover's Tale," as has been already intimated, was written in Tennyson's nineteenth year. It consisted of three parts, only two of which were printed. "Feeling," says Lord Tennyson, in the preface to the 1879 edition, "the imperfection of the poem, I withdrew it from the press. One of my friends, however, who, boy-like, admired the boy's work, distributed among our common associates of that hour some copies of these two parts, without my knowledge, without the omissions and amendments I had in contemplation, and marred by the many misprints of the compositor." One of these copies was sold in London in 1870, and as a result became "mercilessly pirated." Lord Tennyson, thereupon, seeing that what he "had scarce deemed worthy to live was not allowed to die," suffered the whole poem to come into the light. In 1837, "St. Agnes" appeared in the *Keepsake*; and the beautiful stanzas, "Oh! that 'twere possible," which were subsequently incorporated in "Maud," and which have

been spoken of by Mr. Swinburne as "the poem of the deepest charm, and fullest delight of pathos and melody, ever written even by Mr. Tennyson," were published in the *Tribute*, a collection of miscellaneous poems edited by Lord Northampton.

An interesting correspondence with Milnes preceded this contribution to the *Tribute*. The *Tribute* was published for a charitable purpose, and Milnes made himself largely responsible for getting together the materials. Among those to whom he wrote for literary assistance was Alfred Tennyson, and "the result," as Mr. Reid says in his "Life of Lord Houghton," "was a correspondence both interesting and characteristic."

"December, 1836.

"DEAR RICHARD,

"As I live eight miles from my post town, and only correspond therewith about once a week, you must not wonder if this reaches you somewhat late. Your former brief I received, though some six days behind time, and stamped with the postmarks of every little market town in the county, but I did not think that it demanded an immediate answer, hence my silence.

"That you had promised the Marquis I would write for him something exceeding the average length of annual compositions; that you had promised him I would write at all—I took this for one of those elegant fictions with which you amuse your aunts of evenings, before you get into the small hours when dreams are true. Three summers back, provoked by the incivility of editors, I swore an oath that I would never again have to do with their vapid books, and I broke it in the sweet face of Heaven when I wrote for Lady what's-her-name Wortley. But then her sister wrote to Brookfield, and said she (Lady W.) was beautiful, so I could not help it. But whether the Marquis be beautiful or not I don't much mind; if he be, let him give God thanks and make no boast. To write for people with prefixes to their names is to milk he-goats; there is neither honour nor

profit. Up to this moment I have not even seen the *Keepsake*; not that I care to see it, but the want of civility decided me not to break mine oath again for man nor woman. And how should such a modest man as I see my name in collocation with the great ones of Southey, Wordsworth, R. M. M., &c., and not feel myself a barndoor fowl among peacocks? Your account of the debate at the Union is amusing; I had never heard of it, for nobody ever writes to me. It is scarcely worth while to put the professor into a passion again. Good-bye.

“ Believe me,

“ Always thine,

“ A. T.”

It appears that Milnes resented this playful bit of banter, as well as his friend's refusal to help him, and that he wrote a somewhat sharp letter in reply. This called forth the following amusing rejoinder from Tennyson:—

“ *January 10, 1837.*

“ Why, what in the name of all the powers, my dear Richard, makes you run me down in this fashion? Now is my nose out of joint, now is my tail not only curled so tight as to lift me off mine hind legs, like Alfred Crowquill's poodle, but fairly between them. Many sticks are broken about me. I am the ass in Homer. I am blown. What has so jaundiced your good-natured eyes as to make them mistake harmless banter for *insolent irony*: harsh terms applicable only to ——, who, big as he is, sits to all posterity astride upon the nipple of literary dandyism, and ‘takes her milk for gall’? ‘*Insolent irony*’ and ‘*piscatory vanity*,’ as if you had been writing to St. Anthony, who converted the soft souls of salmon; but may St. Anthony's fire consume all misapprehension, the spleen-born mother of five-fold more evil on our turnip-spheroid than is malice aforethought. Had I been writing to a nervous, morbidly irritable man, down in the world, stark spoiled with the staggers of a mismanaged imagination, and quite oppressed by fortune and by the reviews, it is possible that I might have

halted to find expressions more suitable to his case ; but that you, who seem at least to take the world as it comes, to doff it and let it pass—that you, a man every way prosperous and talented, should have taken pet at my unhappy badinage, made me—lay down my pipe and stare at the fire for *ten* minutes, till the stranger fluttered up the chimney. You wish that I had never written that passage. So do I, since it seems to have been such an offence. Perhaps you likewise found a stumbling-block in the expression ‘vapid books,’ as the angry inversion of four commas seems to intimate. But are not *Annals* vapid? Or could I *possibly* mean that what you or Trench or De Vere chose to write therein must be vapid? I thought you knew me better than even to insinuate these things. Had I spoken the same words to you laughingly in my chair, and with my own emphasis, you would have seen what they really meant, but coming to read them in a fit of indigestion, or with a slight matutinal headache after your Apostolic Symposium, you subject them to such misinterpretation as, if I had not sworn to be true friend to you till my latest death-ruckle, would have gone far to make me indignant. But least said, soonest mended ; which comes with peculiar grace from me after all this verbiage. You judge me rightly in supposing that I would not be backward in doing a really charitable deed. I will either bring or send you something for your *Annual*. It is very problematical whether I shall be able to come and see you as I proposed, so do not return earlier from your tour on my account ; and if I come, I should only be able to stop a few days, for as I and all my people are going to leave this place very shortly never to return, I have much upon my hands. But whether I see you or no,

Believe me,

“ Always thine affectionately,

“ A. TENNYSON.

“I have spoken to Charles. He has promised to contribute to your *Annual*. Frederick, I dare say, will follow his example. See now whether I am not doing my best for

you, and whether you had any occasion to threaten me with that black Anacarna and her cocoa-shod coves of niggers. I cannot have her strolling about the land in this way. It is neither good for her reputation, nor mine. When is Lord Northampton's book to be published, and how long may I wait before I send anything by way of contribution?"

Though silent, Tennyson could not have been idle during the next few years. He was working, studying, preparing, and biding his time. Very little has been chronicled about his movements during this period. Sometimes, it is said, he lived at Caistor with an uncle, and sometimes in London, in "poverty, with his friends and his golden dreams"; but mostly with his mother and sisters.

The friends of that day were few in number, but, like himself, rare in quality. R. H. Horne, the author of the famous "farthing epic" of "Orion," writing of those days, says, "Avoiding general society, he would prefer to sit up all night with a friend, or else to sit and think alone. Beyond a very small circle he is never met." An occasional reference in the magazines and reviews, sometimes favourable, but as frequently the reverse, reminded him that, if he had shut himself up from the world, the world had not forgotten him. Ten years is a great slice out of a man's life, and when one is between twenty and thirty, the voluntary self-effacement of genius must be a task requiring something more than Japanese fortitude. But Tennyson, wrapped in his far-reaching contemplations, and laying up a store of unpriceable experience, was equal to the denial. During this period he formed the acquaintance of Thomas Carlyle, and the two great spirits found much in common. A friendship based upon a close accord of tastes sprang up between them. They went for long walks together, far into the night; they often dined together at the Cock tavern in the Strand; they met at Carlyle's house in Chelsea, and had "wit combats," recalling those of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson at the Mermaid. An auditor of some of those discussions speaks of the richness of fancy,

the fulness of philosophic thought, the grand roll of argument which characterized them. We can imagine, though all too faintly, what the conversation of two such men must have been, when, in the sacredness of the domestic circle, they poured forth their thoughts with a glorious freedom from restraint. Carlyle, there can be little doubt, had a considerable influence upon Tennyson. Both he and his wife were quick to perceive the genius of their young friend, and—although Carlyle himself had but a poor idea of poets and their calling—to give him the encouragement which, from the lips of competent advisers, is so sweet to those who would fain climb the Parnassian heights.

“One evening” (in 1840), as Mr. Froude relates, “when Carlyle came home from his walk, he found Tennyson sitting with Mrs. Carlyle in the garden, smoking comfortably. He admired and almost loved Tennyson. He says: ‘A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free and easy, who swims outwardly and inwardly with great composure in an inarticulate element of tranquil chaos and tobacco smoke. Great now and then when he does emerge—a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man!’”

Max O'Rell tells a good story of the Carlyle and Tennyson friendship. “One night they retired into the library in order to talk more at their ease, seated themselves on each side of the fireplace, and lighted their pipes. There, during two hours, plunged in a profound meditation, the silence was only broken by the little hard and regular noise made by the mouth in emitting the puffs of tobacco. Not a single word was pronounced. At length, after two hours of this mute conversation between two great souls who understood each other without speaking, Tennyson got up to take leave of his host. Carlyle conducted him to the door, and, seizing him by the hand, said these memorable words—‘Eh, Alfred, we have had a grand night. Come back again soon.’”

In the year 1838, we find Tennyson a member of the Anonymous (afterwards called the Sterling) Club—a coterie

of men like Carlyle, Cunningham, John Stuart Mill, Thackeray, Forster, Sterling, Lushington, Landor, and Macready, who met once a month to have a little dinner, followed by the discussion of matters of literary and philosophical interest.

Many men, smitten as Tennyson was by a thunderbolt of fate which had sundered the earthly ties of a very sacred friendship, would have struck the wild chords of sorrow while the poignancy of grief was yet in its first freshness. Tennyson, with a deeper distress, wept and waited. As the years rolled on, the truest proof of worth in literary affairs began to manifest itself. The mocking laughter of the critics had not silenced or lessened his admirers, and there came, slowly but none the less surely, a demand for a new edition of his works. In 1842, this was met by the publication, in two volumes, of a carefully revised selection from the volumes of 1830 and 1833, together with a number of new pieces. Six of the latter, namely, "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," "The Blackbird," "The Goose," and the three untitled poems, beginning, "You ask me why," "Of old sat Freedom," and "Love thou thy land," were written in 1833, when the poet was only twenty-four years old. "Never," says a good critic, writing of these three last-named lyrics, "has political philosophy been wedded to the poetic form more happily than in the three short pieces on England and her institutions." Passages in these youthful productions have received the rare honour of becoming crystallized into popular quotations. It is worthy of remark that in "You ask me why" and "Love thou thy land," Tennyson essayed the metre which he was afterwards to use with such consummate mastery in "In Memoriam." The other new pieces in the 1842 volumes were "Ulysses," founded on a passage in Dante; "Love and Duty," "The Two Voices," "The Talking Oak," "The Epic," "Morte d'Arthur," "The Gardener's Daughter," "Dora," partly suggested by Miss Mitford's pastoral sketches in "Our Village"; "Audley Court," "Walking to the Mail," "St. Simeon Stylites," "Locksley Hall," "Godiva," part of the "Day Dream";

"Lady Clare," suggested by Miss Ferrier's novel, "Inheritance"; "The Lord of Burleigh," "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere," "A Farewell," "The Beggar Maid," "The Vision of Sin," "The Skipping Rope," since withdrawn; "Break, break" (said to have been written in a Lincolnshire lane), and "The Poet's Song."

This list includes some of the best known and most popular of Lord Tennyson's writings. It is no mere figurative phrase to say that they took the literary world by storm, and were received with a general manifestation of intellectual rapture. The ten years had indeed been occupied to splendid purpose. The new works were rich in the best qualities of lyrical poetry. There was no longer any question as to Tennyson's claims to recognition. Detraction, if not entirely silenced, was discredited. Criticism of a disparaging kind was overwhelmed by the acclamations with which these noble additions to English literature were welcomed. "Locksley Hall," with its stream of ethical and social speculation, and its free full roll of emotion, leapt into immediate and never-wavering popular favour. Some one has described it as a string of "gusty heroics," and others have called it vague and Wertherian in drift, but its influence on the young men of that day, and of many a day after, had a great and spiritual value. A story was for a long time current, to the effect that "Locksley Hall" was based upon personal experiences. M. Taine refers to this as if he believed it; and it is curious to note that Miss Mitford, in 1847, spoke of William Harness as having just been dining "with the heroine of 'Locksley Hall' and her husband." The story had not the smallest foundation in fact.* Whether the passion of the poem

* When this poem was published, Mr. Rogers said to Mr. Tennyson, "That was something of my case: I was fond of a girl who was, or I thought her, intellectual; and after all she married a dog-and-horse man. When she first met me after her marriage, she blushed, for she knew what she had done."

There was a Cambridge undergraduate, some time after Tennyson had left Cambridge, walking with another undergraduate in Trumpington Street. When Mr. Tennyson's name was touched upon, he cried out, "Do not mention that man's name, I hate him. I am the unhappy hero

was inspired by circumstances that came within its author's personal range, or grew out of the fulness of the imagination, it is equally beautiful as a work of art, and equally valuable in the sonorous moral of its lessons.

The gallant wooing of "The Lord of Burleigh"; the sweet story of "Lady Clare"; *Godiva*, firm in its delicate drawing, and exquisitely pure in colour; the Wordsworthian poem of "Dora"; and the fine fragment on the death of Arthur—"fit prelude to the lordly music of the *Idylls*,"—are beyond the scope of any kind of criticism nowadays, save that of appreciative analysis, having won a secure and lasting popularity in the minstrelsy of our island tongue. Then, in "The Two Voices," we have a strikingly effective portrayal of the wavering, undecided mind or will, listening to its two spiritual counsellors as they tender their discordant advice.

In these volumes, as in their predecessors, the poet's exquisite portraiture of women was a noteworthy feature. A well-known writer in one of the reviews has said that Tennyson has "studied, sounded, painted woman in form, in motion, in character, in office, in capability, with rare devotion, power, and skill." M. Taine, too, has remarked that "what first attracted people were Tennyson's portraits of women. Adeline, Eleanore, Lilian, the May Queen, were keepsake characters from the hand of a lover and an artist. And there could not be too much of an art so just, so consummate, in painting the charming prettiness, the sudden hauteurs, the half-blushes, the imperceptible and fleeting caprices of feminine beauty."

The new poems were characterized by a more perfect command in the music of their rhythm. The poetic faculty for shaping his visions into words had, to use a phrase of Mr. R. H. Hutton's, grown equal to the strength of the visions themselves. "*Locksley Hall*" moves along with a roll of finely measured melody. The "*Morte d'Arthur*,"

of '*Locksley Hall*.' It is the story of my cousin's love and mine, known all through Cambridge when Mr. Tennyson was there, and he put it into verse." The truth was that Mr. Tennyson had never heard any such story, nor had he known this reputed hero.

"Ulysses," and "Godiva" are the perfection of metrical expression. And what pictures of English scenery he gives us!—not bare rugged scenery, not the land of the mountain and the flood—but the rich luxuriant landscape, the well-kept garden, the pleasant homestead, the baronial hall, the rich pastures, the glorious foliage of summer woods. His idylls of rural life have the scent of the hedgerows and the new-mown hay. He gives us vivid pictures of Nature in her tranquil English moods, and throughout all of them minute observation is blended with refined sentiment, and a lofty purity of thought. Furthermore, Tennyson's new poems were immediately welcomed, not only because of their delicate fancy and melodic charm, but because they reflected, in a way not hitherto attempted, the spirit of the age. Here was a poet who, while he could paint charming little vignettes, could also give expression to the struggles of emotion, the heart-throbs of unrest, that make up so much of the strange drama of our modern life.

One of the promptest to recognize the greatness of Tennyson's genius was Charles Dickens. In 1842 he was staying at his favourite Broadstairs, and the new volumes of poems became his frequent companions. "I have been reading" (he writes on the 7th of August), "Tennyson all this morning, on the sea-shore. Among other trifling effects, the waters have dried up as they did of old, and shown me all the mermen and mermaids at the bottom of the ocean; together with millions of queer creatures, half fish and half fungus, looking down into all manner of coral caves and seaweed conservatories; and staring in with their great dull eyes at every open nook and loophole. Who else, too, could conjure up such a close to the extraordinary and, as Landor would say, 'most woonderful' series of pictures in the 'Dream of Fair Women' as—

" 'Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,
And hushed seraglios.' "

A couple of years later Dickens again wrote, "Tennyson

I have been reading again and again. What a great creature he is!" These opinions were never changed. With regard to other writers, Mr. Forster has told us, Dickens's judgment sometimes varied, but "he never faltered in his allegiance to Tennyson."

Carlyle, writing to a correspondent within a year of the publication of the "Poems," says that Alfred Tennyson, alone of that time, had proved singing in our curt English tongue to be possible in some measure. Miss Mitford had already spoken of his volumes as "the most delicious that have appeared for many years," and declared that she knew nothing in modern days equal to "Mariana," "The Sleeping Beauty," and "Locksley Hall." Meanwhile, Thomas Aird, the Scotch poet, and Margaret Fuller in America, were writing enthusiastically of the new poems.

The great reviews were at last compelled, by the commanding verdict of public opinion, to treat him with respect. The *Quarterly* made some amends for its contemptuous article of 1833, with a thoughtful review by John Sterling, who spoke of the blank verse poems as "among the richest of our recent literature." Mr. James Spedding, one of the old Cambridge companions, obtained leave from Macvey Napier to review the volumes in the *Edinburgh*, on condition that he would not commit that "canny" periodical to any praises or prophecies that would endanger its reputation for literary prescience. Mr. Spedding, although he did not venture upon any very rash forecast, did presume to say that if Mr. Tennyson could find a subject large enough to take the entire impress of his mind, he might produce a work which should as much exceed in value those under review, as a series of quantities multiplied into each other exceeds in value the whole series added together. Mr. Napier, with an excess of prudential caution, considered this too strong, and the passage underwent modification. But the *Edinburgh* notice was, as might be expected from a man of Spedding's taste and judgment, a discerning analysis of the charm of the Tennysonian music.

Across the Atlantic, Tennyson at once found a large circle of admirers. Besides Margaret Fuller, Emerson, Lowell, and Edgar Poe added their tribute of admiration. "I am not sure," said the author of "The Raven," writing in the *Democratic Review*, "that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets. The uncertainty attending the public conception of the term 'poet' alone prevents me from demonstrating that he is." But there is no occasion to dwell longer upon qualities which found a warm recognition fifty years ago, and have never since lost touch of the popular affection. Still, even in this more elaborate effort, Tennyson did not reach, in nicety and perfect lucidness of expression, his own ideal. Many of the 1842 poems have undergone alteration, excision, and addition at different times. It is not necessary, however, further to burden these pages with details which the curious student may find out for himself by a comparison of the various editions. This seems rather the place for stringing together some of that personal information which is the more particular purpose of biography. This is scant enough; for the poet, with an almost morbid sensitiveness, kept himself very much secluded from the public eye. His life, except for occasional plunges into the fierce currents of the intellectual world, would have been one of monastic solitude. "He moves on his way," said William Howitt, "heard, but by the public unseen. Many an admiring man may have said with Solomon of old, 'I have sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he answered not.' If you want a popular poet, you know pretty well where to look for him; . . . but in few or none of these places will you find Alfred Tennyson. You may hear his voice, but where is the man? He is wandering in some dreamland, beneath the shade of old and charmed forests, by far-off shores, where

"All night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white';

by the old mill-dam, thinking of the merry miller and his pretty daughter; or is wandering over the open wolds where

"Norland whirlwinds blow.'

From all these places—from the silent corridor of an ancient convent; from some shrine where a devoted knight recites his vows; from the drear monotony of the ‘moated grange,’ or the ferny forest, beneath the ‘talking oak’—comes the voice of Tennyson, rich, dreamy, passionate, yet not impatient; musical with the airs of chivalrous ages, yet mingling in his songs the theme and the spirit of those that are yet to come.”

Fortune had not, in a pecuniary sense, smiled upon Tennyson. Although his fame had gone up at a bound, the golden harvest was not ripe for reaping. He occasionally visited London, and lodged with friends, sometimes in the Temple, sometimes elsewhere, and amid the roar of London traffic some of his most melodious verse was written. In the year 1843 he met the venerable Wordsworth for the first time, the interview taking place at Mr. Moxon’s house. Two years later, the poet of the Lakes wrote to Professor Reid of Philadelphia in the following terms: “I saw Tennyson, when I was in London, several times. He is decidedly the first of our living poets, and I hope will live to give the world still better things. You will be pleased to hear that he expressed, in the strongest terms, his gratitude to my writings. To this I was far from indifferent, though persuaded that he is not much in sympathy with what I should myself most value in my attempts—namely, the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to accept its most ordinary appearance.”

Tennyson was present, on September the 23rd, 1843, at some private theatricals got up by Dickens and Forster. We learn this from a very interesting passage in Jane Welsh Carlyle’s correspondence. Writing to her husband, she says: “Passing through a long dim passage, I came on a tall man leant to the wall, with his head touching the ceiling like a caryatid, to all appearance asleep, or resolutely trying it under most unfavourable circumstances. ‘Alfred Tennyson!’ I exclaimed in joyful surprise. ‘Well!’ said he, taking the hand I held out to him and forgetting to let

it go again. 'I did not know you were in town,' said I. 'I should like to know who you are,' said he; 'I know that I know you, but I cannot tell your name,'—and I had actually to name myself to him. Then he woke up in good earnest, and said he had been meaning to come to Chelsea. 'But Carlyle is in Scotland,' I told him, with due humility. 'So I heard from Spedding already, but I asked Spedding would he go with me to see Mrs. Carlyle, and he said he would.' I told him, if he really meant to come, he had better not wait for backing, under the present circumstances, and then pursued my way to Macready's box." The promised visit was paid the next evening, as we learn from the following extract: "I was lying on the sofa, headachy, when a cab drove up. Mr. Strachey? No. Alfred Tennyson alone! Actually, by a superhuman effort of volition, he had put himself into a cab, nay, brought himself away from a dinner-party, and was there to smoke and talk with me!—by myself—me! But no such blessedness was in store for him. Craik prosed, and John babbled for his entertainment; and I, whom he had come to see, got scarcely any speech with him. The exertion, however, of having to provide him with tea through my own unassisted ingenuity, drove away my headache: also, perhaps, a little feminine vanity at having inspired such a man with the energy to take a cab on his own responsibility, and to throw himself on Providence for getting away again!"

Earlier in the same year Mrs. Carlyle had given the following description of the poet to a lady correspondent. It is interesting to note with what shrewdness she penetrates into his elements of greatness. "Three of the autographs which I send you to-day are first-rate. A Yankee would almost give a dollar apiece for them. Entire characteristic letters from Pickwick, Lytton Bulwer, and Alfred Tennyson; the last the greatest genius of the three, though the vulgar public have not as yet recognized him for such. Get his poems if you can, and read the 'Ulysses,' 'Dora,' the 'Vision of Sin,' and you will find that we do not overrate him. Besides, he is a very handsome man, and a noble-

hearted one, with something of the gipsy in his appearance, which for me is perfectly charming. Babbie never saw him, unfortunately, or perhaps I should say fortunately, for she must have fallen in love with him on the spot, unless she be made absolutely of ice; and then, men of genius have never anything to keep wives upon."

In the year 1843, the "Poems," in two volumes, passed into a second edition; in 1845, into a third; and in 1846, into a fourth. The two volumes were incorporated in one in the 1848 and succeeding editions. As early as the first of the above dates, Moxon, the publisher, told Miss Mitford that Tennyson was the only poet by whom he had not lost.

We get a very good pen-and-ink sketch of the Tennyson of that day from the Carlyle and Emerson correspondence. Emerson, having asked Carlyle to send him a description of Tennyson, obtained the following strong bit of portraiture, dated August 1844: "Moxon informs me that Tennyson is now in Town, and means to come and see me. Of this latter result I shall be very glad. Alfred is one of the few British and Foreign Figures (a not increasing number, I think!) who are and remain beautiful to me—a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother! However, I doubt he will not come; he often skips me, in these brief visits to Town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom—carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos. Alfred is the son of a Lincolnshire Gentleman Farrier, I think; indeed, you see in his verses that he is a native of 'moated granges' and green, flat pastures, not of mountains and their torrents and storms. He had his breeding at Cambridge, as if for the Law or Church; being master of a small annuity on his Father's decease, he preferred clubbing with his Mother and some Sisters, to live unpromoted and write Poems. In this way he lives still, now here, now there; the family always within reach of London, never in it; he himself making rare and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade's rooms. I

think he must be under forty—not much under it. One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to. He is often unwell; very chaotic—his way is through Chaos and the Bottomless and Pathless; not handy for making out many miles upon.”

In acknowledging this letter, Emerson wrote: “The sketch you drew of Tennyson was right welcome, for he is an old favourite of mine—I owned his book before I saw your face;—though I love him with allowance. O, cherish him with love and praise, and draw from him whole books full of new verses yet!”

CHAPTER V.

THE narrative of Tennyson's movements now becomes of necessity more fragmentary, and one has to depend very much upon scattered references which, although they might be discarded by a biographer with a wealth of materials at his disposal, furnish for our more modest undertaking precious grains of personal interest. In 1845 the poet was staying temporarily at Holland House, Kensington. He was now a man of mark even among the most distinguished representatives of literature, and was eagerly welcomed in its inner circles. He had already made the acquaintance of Samuel Rogers, then more than eighty years of age—the Nestor, or perhaps the Tithonus, of his day—and was a frequent guest at his Tusculum, listening, no doubt, with interest to the old man's reminiscences of Byron. He had, we are told, a great affection for Rogers, with whom he

constantly breakfasted and dined. "I have dined alone with him," Lord Tennyson has been heard to say, "and we have talked about death till the tears rolled down his face." Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in his diary, under date January 31, 1845: "I dined this day with Rogers. We had an interesting party of eight. Moxon, the publisher; Kenny, the dramatic poet; Spedding, Lushington, and Alfred Tennyson, three young men of eminent talent belonging to literary young England—the latter, Tennyson, being by far the most eminent of the young poets. He is an admirer of Goethe, and I had a long *tête-à-tête* with him about the great poet. We waited for the eighth—a lady" (the Hon. Mrs. Norton) "who, Rogers said, was coming on purpose to see Tennyson."

It was at Rogers's that Tennyson met Tom Moore, and there, too, he first met Mr. Gladstone, Leigh Hunt, and Landor. He was also on intimate terms with John Forster, and Macready, the actor. One of his companions in those days was Mr. Hallam, the father of his dead friend, whose opinion—so runs the story—he once asked of Carlyle's "French Revolution." Mr. Hallam replied, in his quick, rapid way, "Upon my word, I once opened the book and read four or five pages. The style is so abominable I could not get on with it." On the other hand, Carlyle's own criticism of the "History of the Middle Ages" was, "Eh! the poor miserable skeleton of a book!"

The popularity of which these little dinners were the sign had for its inevitable consequence the banter of the wits. No matter how lofty a man's purpose, or how beautiful his thoughts, the jesters, if he be but important enough for their shafts, will have their say. Tennyson played a conspicuous part in the "Bon Gaultier Ballads," republished from *Tait's* and *Fraser's* Magazines in 1845. These humorous productions were the joint work of Theodore (not at that time Sir Theodore) Martin and W. E. Aytoun. "In these papers," says Martin, "we ran a-tilt, with all the recklessness of youthful spirits, against such of the tastes or follies of the day as presented an opening for ridicule or mirth. . . .

Fortunately for our purpose, there were then living not a few poets whose style and manner of thought were sufficiently marked to make imitation easy, and sufficiently popular for a parody of their characteristics to be readily recognized. . . . It was precisely the poets whom we most admired that we imitated the most frequently. This was not certainly from any want of reverence, but rather out of the fulness of our admiration, just as the excess of a lover's fondness often runs over into raillery of the very qualities that are dearest to his heart." It is well to bear this explanation in mind, for although it may be difficult to accept the dictum of Sir T. Martin, "Let no one parody a poet unless he loves him," and its natural corollary, "If you love a poet, parody him," it may fairly be allowed to qualify the condemnation with which too rigid censors of literary etiquette have visited the Tennysonian parodies in "Bon Gaultier." These are four in number—"The Biter Bit," "The Lay of the Love-lorn," "The Laureate" (written on the death of Southey in 1843), and "Caroline." The third of these, ascribed to "A—— T——," read by the light of that dignity with which Tennyson subsequently invested the office of Poet Laureate, wears to modern readers, and especially to his admirers, an appearance of unnecessary flippancy. Some verses from "The Laureate's Tourney," in the same collection, have a more direct personal reference, and are significant, inasmuch as the writer recognizes Tennyson as a possible candidate for the office to which, five years later, he was appointed:—

"Then up and spake young Tennyson—'Who's here that fears for death?
'Twere better one of us should die, than England lose the wreath!

"Let's cast the lots among us now, which two shall fight to-morrow:—
For armour bright we'll club our mite, and horses we can borrow.
'Twere shame that bards of France should sneer, and German *Dichters*
too,
If none of British song would dare a deed of *derring-do*!

"The lists of love are mine,' said Moore, 'and not the lists of Mars';
'Said Hunt, 'I seek the jars of wine, but shun the combat's jars!'
'I'm old,' quoth Samuel Rogers. 'Faith,' says Campbell, 'so am I!'
'And I'm in holy orders, sirs!' quoth Tom of Ingoldsby.

“ ‘Now, out upon ye, craven loons!’ cried Moxon, good at need,—
 ‘Bide, if ye will, secure at home, and sleep while others bleed.
 I second Alfred’s motion, boys, let’s try the chance of lot,
 And monks shall sing and bells shall ring, for him that goes to pot.’ ”

These verses at least afford an indication of the prominence which Tennyson had now assumed in the world of letters. In this connection, they help us the better to understand the circumstance which has now to be recorded. In the autumn of 1845, it was announced that Mr. Tennyson had been placed on the pension-list by Sir Robert Peel, for an annuity of £200. The harvest of fame he was already reaping in abundant sheaves, but the other harvest—that which pays rent and taxes and butchers’ bills—was not to fall to his sickle until later years.

An amusing story has been told with regard to Milnes’s endeavour to secure Sir Robert Peel’s favourable consideration to this proposal:—

“Richard Milnes,” said Carlyle one day, withdrawing his pipe from his mouth, as they were seated together in the little house in Cheyne Row, “when are you going to get that pension for Alfred Tennyson?”

“My dear Carlyle,” responded Milnes, “the thing is not so easy as you seem to suppose. What will my constituents say if I do get the pension for Tennyson? They know nothing about him or his poetry, and they will probably think he is some poor relation of my own, and that the whole affair is a job.”

Solemn and emphatic was Carlyle’s response. “Richard Milnes, on the day of judgment, when the Lord asks you why you didn’t get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents; it is *you* that will be damned.” *

There were two applications for pensions, one on behalf of Sheridan Knowles, and the other on behalf of Tennyson, whose friends were anxious that he should be in a position to devote himself entirely to the muse. Peel consulted Milnes on the subject, on the ground that he (Peel) knew

* Wemyss Reid’s “Life of Lord Houghton.”

absolutely nothing of either Tennyson or Knowles. He admitted that he had never seen the latter's name on a playbill, or read a poem by the former; and at his request Milnes sent him "Ulysses" and "Locksley Hall," with a letter recommending that, in the interests of literature, the pension should be given to Tennyson. Sir Robert adopted this advice, but before very long he was able to perform a similar good service for Sheridan Knowles.

In connection with the pension, the following extract from an unpublished letter by Samuel Rogers has a curious interest:—

"MY DEAR DR. MACKAY,

" Tennyson is by many thought unfit for a pension; but he has many infirmities, such as to you I hope will be ever unknown, and such as make him utterly incapable of supporting himself. Of his genius I need say nothing, and have only to wish that I could always understand him.

"Yours truly,

"SAMUEL ROGERS.

"October 20, 1845."

This, it is curious to note, was written after Tennyson's powers were generally recognized.

The grant, as is generally the case with such bestowments, provoked some jealousy, and the sharpness of contemporary criticism was accentuated by the partisans of those who regarded the favour shown to Tennyson as an injustice done to themselves. Arising out of this feeling, an episode took place which, as a matter of biographical history, cannot be passed over, however anxious one might be not to disentomb these ancient controversies. There is the less compunction in setting forth the circumstance, in that the bitterness of feeling it expressed was of the most transient kind, and was superseded, in the course of time, by sentiments of reciprocal admiration and regard in the case of both the illustrious persons concerned. Among the critics of the pension was Bulwer Lytton, who, in "The

New Timon : a Romance of London," was so ill-advised as to publish the following cutting but unjust lines :—

" Not mine, not mine (O muse forbid) the boon
Of borrowed notes, the mock-bird's modish tune,
The jingling medley of purloined conceits,
Out-babying Wordsworth and out-glittering Keats ;
Where all the airs of patchwork-pastoral chime
To drowsy ears in Tennysonian rhyme !

* * * *

Let school-miss Alfred vent her chaste delight
On ' darling little rooms so warm an l bright ' ;
Chant ' I'm aweary ' in infectious strain,
And catch her ' blue fly singing i' the pane ' ;
Though praised by critics and adored by Blues,
Though Peel with pudding plump the puling muse,
Though Theban taste the Saxon purse controls,
And pensions Tennyson while starves a Knowles,
Rather be thou, my poor Pierian maid,
Decent at last, in Hayley's weeds arrayed,
Than patch with frippery every tinsel line,
And flaunt, admired, the Rag Fair of the Nine."

In addition to this contemptuous attack, there was a foot-note, stating that Tennyson was "quartered on the public purse, in the prime of life, without either wife or family." Whatever degree of surprise may have been occasioned by the incident of the pension, there was no justification for the rancorous strain of the lines in "The New Timon." They would, however, have been speedily forgotten, and never perhaps recalled to later memories, if it had not been that Tennyson, moved to anger by the references personal to himself, retaliated in some verses that hit the mark like the arrows of Philoctetes. These appeared in *Punch*, on February the 18th, 1846, and bore the signature "Alcibiades." Bulwer Lytton was not then popular with Thackeray and the wits of the *Punch* coterie, hence, perhaps, the eager hospitality given to the contribution of one who, however eminent, was outside the charmed circle of the staff. There had been a stinging allusion to "The New Timon, and Alfred Tennyson's Pension," a week or two before, but it fell short, in bitterness, of the poet's own rejoinder, entitled "The New Timon and the Poets."

Lord Tennyson, with characteristic magnanimity, never

included the lines in his works, but as they have often been reprinted elsewhere, and as, moreover, they relate to an important event in his literary career, it seems impossible to omit them here :—

“ We know him out of Shakespeare’s art,
And those fine curses which he spoke ;
The *old* Timon, with his noble heart,
That, strongly loathing, greatly broke.

“ So died the Old ; here comes the New :
Regard him : a familiar face ;
I *thought* we knew him : What, it’s you,
The padded man that wears the stays—

“ Who killed the girls and thrilled the boys
With dandy pathos when you wrote ;
O Lion, you, that made a noise,
And shook a mane *en papillotes*.

“ And once you tried the Muses, too ;
You failed, sir ; therefore now you turn,
You fall on those who are to you
As captain is to subaltern.

“ But men of long-enduring hopes,
And careless what the hour may bring,
Can pardon little would-be Popes
And Brummels, when they try to sting.

“ An artist, sir, should rest in Art,
And waive a little of his claim ;
To have the great poetic heart
Is more than all poetic fame.

“ But you, sir, you are hard to please,
You never look but half content,
Nor like a gentleman at ease,
With moral breadth of temperament.

“ And what with spites and what with fears,
You cannot let a body be ;
It’s always ringing in your ears,
‘ They call this man as great as me.’

“ What profits now to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt—
A dapper boot—a little hand—
If half the little soul is dirt ?

“ You talk of tinsel ! Why, we see
Old marks of rouge upon your cheeks ;
You prate of Nature !—you are he
That spilt his life upon the cliques.

"A Timon you ! Nay, nay for shame ;
 It looks too arrogant a jest—
 The fierce old man, to take *his* name,—
 You band-box. Off, and let him rest."

A knowledge of how these literary knights fought, enables us the better to appreciate the magnanimity with which they subsequently buried the remembrance of their redoubtable passage of arms. Tennyson was the first to regret the passionate scorn of his answer. In the very next number of *Punch*, with the same signature, appeared under the title of "After-thought," the verses which now have a place in his collected works as "Literary Squabbles." They are written in a loftier mood, condemnatory of the "petty fools of rhyme" who—

"Strain to make an inch of room
 For their sweet selves, and cannot hear
 The sullen Lethe rolling doom
 On them and theirs and all things here."

Bulwer Lytton, not to be outdone in generosity, obliterated the offending passage from later editions of his satire. It is pleasant to know that the feud, keen though it was at the time, left no permanent soreness behind. Some years later, Lord Lytton publicly referred to a line of Tennyson's as the thought "so exquisitely expressed by our Poet Laureate"; and in the preface to a new edition of his "King Arthur"—a work which attempts to graft modern characters upon legendary machinery—he remarked "in deference to the fame of an illustrious contemporary," that he had never anticipated Mr. Tennyson would take up the same subject, and that since it had turned out otherwise, he was thankful his view was so different. "I may claim," he adds, "one merit rare in those who come after him; I have filled no pitchers from fountains hallowed by himself." In 1877, Tennyson dedicated his drama of "Harold" to Lord Lytton, then Viceroy of India, his ancient antagonist's son. "Your father," he says, after acknowledging some debt due to Bulwer Lytton's "Harold," "dedicated his 'Harold' to my father's brother; allow me to dedicate my 'Harold' to yourself." In such ways were

the traces of unkindliness honourably, and even generously, wiped away by *amendes* whose gracefulness at least equalled the asperity, which is saying much, of the original quarrel.

As instancing the hold which the poetry of Tennyson, notwithstanding the depreciatory attacks of envy and disappointment, had taken upon the minds of those best qualified to judge, a passage may be quoted from the interesting "Autobiography" of Thomas Cooper, the ex-Chartist. Cooper visited Wordsworth at Rydal Mount, in 1846, and had some conversation with him on the poetry of the day: "'There is little that can be called high poetry,' said Wordsworth. 'Mr. Tennyson affords the richest promise. He will do great things yet; and ought to have done greater things by this time.' 'His sense of music,' I observed, 'seems more perfect than that of any of the new race of poets.' 'Yes,' he replied, 'the perception of harmony lies in the very essence of the poet's nature, and Mr. Tennyson gives magnificent proofs that he is endowed with it.' I instanced Tennyson's rich association of musical words in his 'Morte d'Arthur,' 'Godiva,' 'Ulysses,' and other pieces, as proofs of his possessing as fine a sense of music in syllables as Keats, and even Milton; and the patriarchal poet, with an approving smile, assented to it."

Wordsworth's complaint that Tennyson ought to have done greater things by this time was being echoed by many of his admirers. Hitherto he had produced no long work. The prediction of his confident disciples that he was capable of more important efforts than rural idylls however charming, and brief poems however perfect—that, in short, he was fit to climb the topmost peaks of epic grandeur, remained so far unfulfilled. All this time, no doubt, he was elaborating "In Memoriam," but it was not to be given to the world for four years yet. Tennyson's Pegasus was not to be whipped or spurred into a hurried pace. But in 1847, "The Princess" appeared. "The Princess," says Mrs. Ritchie, "with all her lovely court and glowing harmonies, was born in London, among the fogs and smuts of Lincoln's Inn,

although, like all works of true art, this poem had grown by degrees in other times and places. The poet came and went, free, unshackled, meditating, inditing. One of my family remembers hearing Tennyson say that 'Tears, Idle Tears,' was suggested by Tintern Abbey: who shall say by what mysterious wonder of beauty and regret, by what sense of the 'transient with the abiding'?"

In its original shape "The Princess" differed materially from its present form. All the references to the prince's cataleptic seizures were woven into the story in the fourth edition (1851); the six intercalary songs were added in the third; and other passages, including the contrast between England and France in the conclusion, have been introduced since the first. There are also several omissions, the most considerable of which is a passage of twenty-five lines withdrawn from the princess's angry speech to Lady Blanche after the tournament. No doubt the poet thought this sustained effort of scolding had too much the character of a feminine scream to be consistent with the dignity of his heroine. His fastidiousness was not confined to the alterations in later editions. While the poem was passing through the press, he subjected it to such minute revision that Mr. Moxon regarded him, says Miss Mitford, as "a great torment, keeping proofs a fortnight to alter, and then sending for revises." "The Princess" has been concisely described as exhibiting an effort to do away with the distinctive spheres of man and woman, and the failure of that effort, which duly winds up with the surrender and marriage of the fairest and chief enthusiast. It may, perhaps, be objected that the central idea which the poet has to carry out is scarcely suited to exhibition in a quasi-dramatic form. Nevertheless, critics cannot but admire the brilliancy and beauty of many of the passages, the purity and nobleness of the main streams of thought, and the delicate grace with which womanly character is painted. It would be impossible to represent with a more deceptive glamour of plausibility the modern views of "woman's rights" than in this exquisite passage:—

“ At last
 She rose upon a wind of prophecy
 Dilating on the future : ‘ Everywhere
 Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
 Two in the tangled business of the world,
 Two in the liberal offices of life,
 Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
 Of science, and the secrets of the mind :
 Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more :
 And everywhere the broad and bounteous Earth
 Should bear a double growth of those rare souls,
 Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world.’ ”

Nor is the antidote of these ideas—the eloquent differentiation put into the prince’s mouth—less poetic in form, while it is certainly more perfect in philosophy :—

“ For woman is not undevelop’t man,
 But diverse : could we make her as the man,
 Sweet love were slain : his dearest bond is this,
 Not like to like, but like in difference.
 Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;
 The man be more of woman, she of man ;
 He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
 Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world ;
 She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
 Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind.
 Till at last she set herself to man,
 Like perfect music unto noble words,” &c.

Lord Tennyson dedicated this work to his friend Henry Lushington. The friendship thus commemorated commenced some years before, and the two families became still more closely connected at a later period by the marriage of Mr. Lushington’s brother with Miss Cecilia Tennyson.* “ It will not, I hope,” writes Mr. G. S. Venables, “ be a violation of confidence to quote Mr. Tennyson’s frequent remark, that, of all the critics with whom he had discussed his own poems, Mr. Lushington was the most suggestive. His taste was perhaps, in this instance, rendered more exquisite by his personal anxiety for the perfection and success of works which could scarcely have interested him more if they had been his own composition. If all Mr. Tennyson’s writings had by some strange accident been

* The epithalamium at the end of “ In Memoriam ” refers to this marriage.

destroyed, Henry Lushington's wonderful memory could, I believe, have reproduced the whole."

Tennyson, like most men of a largely meditative turn, had for many years been, and always continued to be, a great smoker. It used to be jestingly said that he sat, like a divinity, "among the clouds"—of his own tobacco-smoke. Carlyle, in the description sent to Emerson, speaks of him as smoking "infinite tobacco." William Howitt, writing of a period not far removed from that which witnessed the production of "The Princess," said, "It is very possible you may come across him in a country inn, with a foot on each hob of the fire-place, a volume of Greek in one hand, his meerschaum in the other—so far advanced towards the seventh heaven that he would not thank you to call him back into this nether world."

The following story, of which several garbled versions have been printed, is told about Alfred Tennyson's love of tobacco. Lord John Russell gave a large *soirée* to which the poet was invited, and during the evening, Lord John came up to him and spoke to him: "Ah, Mr. Tennyson, how d'ye do? Glad to see you. You've been travelling on the continent lately, I hear. How did you like Italy?" "I liked it very much." "And saw all the pictures and works of art at Florence?" "Yes, but I was bothered in Italy. I could not get any English tobacco for love or money. A lady told me that I could smuggle some from an English ship, if I heavily bribed the custom-house officers; but I didn't do that, and came away."

Another characteristic glimpse of the poet is furnished us in the Carlyle-Emerson correspondence, and it is again Carlyle who paints the little picture. "Tennyson," he says, writing in December, 1847, "has been here for three weeks; dining daily till he is near dead;—setting out a Poem withal. He came in to us on Sunday evening last, and on the preceding Sunday: a truly interesting Son of Earth, and Son of Heaven—who has almost lost his way, amongst will-o'-the-wisps, I doubt; and may flounder ever deeper, over neck and nose at last, among the quagmires that

abound! I like him well, but can do next to nothing for him. Milnes, with general co-operation, got him a Pension; and he had bread and tobacco; but this is a poor outfit for such a soul. He wants a *task*; and, alas! that of spinning rhymes, and naming it 'Art' and 'high Art,' in a time like ours, will never furnish him."

Between 1847 and 1850 there is not much to record. The circle of the poet's friends, and of those acquaintances with whom there was a link of sympathy which the ordinary interchanges of social courtesy do not supply, was continuously growing larger. We find him, about this time, on familiar terms with Dickens, Forster, Charles Knight, and others of the same coterie. In Forster's "Life of Dickens" it is stated that, through all the friendly and familiar days of 1848-1851, Dickens gave full allegiance and honoured welcome to Alfred Tennyson. The great novelist was then living in Devonshire Terrace, and besides Tennyson, Monckton Milnes, Lytton, Captain Marryat, and Tom Taylor were often his guests. Charles Knight, in "Passages of a Working Life," writes: "Mr. Forster and I became more intimately associated about the middle of the century. In his chambers in Lincoln's Inn he frequently gathered around him a small circle of men of letters. Those who sat at his hospitable board were seldom too few or too many for general conversation. There I first met Tennyson, and there Carlyle. In familiar intercourse, such as that of Mr. Forster's table, Mr. Tennyson was cordial and unaffected, exhibiting, as in his writings, the simplicity of a manly character, and feeling safe from his chief aversion, the *digito monstrari*, was quite at his ease."

We come across the following passage, under the year 1848, in Sir Henry Taylor's correspondence. Aubrey de Vere writes: "Tennyson is very indignant at the events in France, and cries in fury, 'Let us not see a French soldier land on the English shore, or I will tear him limb from limb'—a very wholesome feeling. 'You are quite a Conservative,' I said to him one day. He replied, 'I believe in progress, and would *conserve the lives of men*'—a very

good definition of rational Conservatism, as it struck me. He is now gone to the island of Valentia to inhale Atlantic breezes and listen to the 'divine sea.' "

CHAPTER VI.

THE year 1850 was a most eventful one in Tennyson's life. He was married, published "In Memoriam," and was made Poet Laureate, all in this year. The lady who was to be thenceforth the sharer of his fortunes and the sweet counsellor of his hearth was Miss Emily Sellwood, the daughter of Mr. Henry Sellwood, a gentleman practising as a solicitor and conveyancer at Horncastle, and coming of a good old Berkshire family. She was also niece to the great Arctic explorer, Sir John Franklin, who was Mrs. Sellwood's brother. There were three Sellwood daughters, the eldest of whom was married to Alfred Tennyson, and the third to his brother Charles. It was at Somersby that the poet first made the acquaintance of his wife. They were married at Shiplake Church, Oxfordshire—a fine old village church, with an ivy-clad tower, storied windows, and precious relics of bygone handicraft in the shape of carved woodwork. The marriage ceremony took place in the leafy month of June—on the 13th, if any one is curious to know the exact date—and was performed by the Rev. D. Rawnsley, the vicar, a relative of the bride's, and witnessed by Cecilia Lushington (*née* Tennyson), Edmund Law Lushington, Catherine Ann Rawnsley, Henry Sellwood, the bride's father, and Charles Richard Welch. The union proved to be one of the most perfect happiness, and although it is not permissible to draw aside the curtain of purely domestic concerns, yet the glimpses which the world has been permitted to get now and then of the Tennysons' home, particularly in that most graceful tribute which the poet paid to his wife in the dedication of "Enoch Arden," permit the conclusion that a pure and steadfast affection kept their union free from those deplorable discords which too often

cast a shadow over the marriages of literary men. Of all the great literary figures who have loomed upon this latter part of the nineteenth century, Lord Tennyson was, without question, one of the most fortunate in his married life.

On the occasion of Tennyson's marriage, Mr. Monckton Milnes offered to place at his disposal, as a residence for life, a wing of the house at Fryston.* This generous proposal, of course, was not accepted.

The publication of "In Memoriam" may be said to have put the coping-stone to the edifice of Tennyson's reputation as a poet. Although it was given to the world without any acknowledgment of being his work, the public did not need to spend much time in idle conjecture as to the authorship. It was felt almost instinctively that the anonymous poem, both by reason of its subject and the splendour of its treatment, could only be attributed to one possible writer. During seventeen years this majestic memorial of a beloved friend had been growing purer and purer in the crucible of a fervent intelligence, until at length it came forth as nearly free from the dross of unperfected expression as any human work of similar dimensions could be. It has been described as "perhaps the richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed." It invested with a halo of romantic tenderness the spirit of modern friendship, and seemed to depict a devotion of the antique world, like that of David and Jonathan, or of Damon and Pythias. As to the structure and versification of the poem, Mr. J. Churton Collins fancies that the general scheme is suggested by the series of sonnets and canzoni dedicated by Petrarch to the memory of Laura. Not only, he says, do the several divisions into which "In Memoriam" may be supposed to fall correspond with the divisions into which Petrarch's series may be fancifully divided, but the whole method and purpose of the two poets would seem to be precisely similar. The same writer traces the origin of the metre, not, as has been sometimes

* Mr. Wemyss Reid's "Life of Lord Houghton."

supposed, to Ben Jonson, but to Lord Herbert of Cherbury. We have excellent authority for saying that, as far as Tennyson knew then, he thought he had invented the metre of "In Memoriam." Certainly the general scheme was never suggested by Petrarch's sonnets and canzoni.

The effect produced on the public mind by this remarkable poem, or series of poems, was immediate and profound. Regarded simply as a threnody, the sad music of its grief touched a responsive chord in the hearts of all who had ever "loved and lost." The beautiful poem in which Milton bewails the untimely death of Edward King may have suggested to Tennyson the idea of lamenting the cruel destiny which had snatched another Lycidas away in the golden dawn of his promise. But directly he struck the wild chords of grief, the theme, in its fruitfulness of suggestion, grew too large for the ordinary limits of elegy. Hence the burden of his sorrow was spread over many years. The poems, a hundred and thirty-one in number, excluding the introductory stanzas and the epithalamium at the end, were written at different periods between 1833 and 1849. As the years roll by, every phase of the soul's grief is delineated. The memory of Hallam is recalled by a hundred associations of circumstance and place. His genial influence and rare gifts are remembered on summer lawns, in college haunts, at the bridal feast, at Christmas gatherings. In the long series of monodies there is continual variety without any departure from the central idea. The poet "circles round the grave," but never goes away from it. From first to last, sorrow is ringing changes upon his soul.

Although the separate poems of which "In Memoriam" is composed are, in one sense—

"Short swallow flights of song that dip
Their wings in tears and skim away,"

yet they are connected by a sequential train of thought, as well as by the community of sentiment that pervades them. Out of his affliction the poet feels his way, through the dark mazes of uncertainty and doubt, to ultimate consolation.

The death of Hallam, just at the time when human judgment would have pronounced him on the threshold of a career of uncommon value to the world, seems one of those malignant strokes of fate which shake men's faith in the eternal fitness of things. The poet's soul, torn from its anchorage, drifts about for an intelligible solution of the mystery of life and death. Perplexed and inconsolable, he mingles with his passionate strain of sorrow the troubled speculations of one groping in the dark. But out of this helplessness and despair there grows up the conviction that the ultimate result of all is good. Through the experience of doubt he passes on his way to a higher faith and submission. His heart-searchings evolve faith out of scepticism, and furnish the sweet comfort that Death is the gate of Life. And although the poem soars into the regions of metaphysical contemplation, and discusses such abstruse questions as the Platonic and Pauline ideas of the soul, yet for the most part it is free from obscurity. As for the deep religious feeling of the poem, that requires no emphasis. Those who fancy that they can detect in certain passages a pantheistic tendency, cannot have understood the purport of the whole poem, which, without a trace of dogma, or any evidence of having been written with a theological purpose, gives to the language of Faith an utterance as noble and as elevating as any that was ever spoken by apostle or priest.

+ To attempt an analysis of this great poem now would be a superfluous task. It has been reviewed by some of the greatest men of the age. It has formed the subject of several keys and numberless commentaries. Its beauties have become crystallized into our daily speech. Its philosophy has carried consolation to many a bereaved heart. Not only is every phrase pregnant with deep thought, but there are freely scattered throughout, as in all Tennyson's works, exquisite pictures of natural beauty. The trees, the flowers, the seasons, the brooks, all have a meaning for him, and help him to illustrate his own. A score of passages might be quoted in proof of this, but the beauties of "In Memoriam" are now so rooted in the popular heart, and

the poem itself is so widely distributed, that it must suffice to deal with it in these general terms. That the poem will live is beyond question, for it deals with a subject of perennial interest. As long as mortality is one of the conditions of our being, the seeming perversity with which Death mows down the flowers of fairest promise must ever be a topic fruitful in suggestiveness to the philosopher, the poet, the man of science, and the man of faith.*

William Wordsworth died on April 23, 1850, but the office of Poet Laureate thus rendered vacant was not immediately filled up. Strange as it may appear to a generation which has grown up in almost unquestioning recognition of Lord Tennyson's supremacy among contemporary poets, no fewer than half a dozen other candidates were put forward, and considered each by his partisans most worthy of the laurel crown. Leigh Hunt had the suffrages of a section; but he was old, not to be named in the same breath with Tennyson as a poet, and, moreover, had undergone imprisonment for lampooning the Queen's uncle—a rather awkward antecedent for a Court poet. Dr. Charles Mackay found some advocates, who possibly discovered in the free swing of his rhymes the potentiality of unlimited ceremonial odes. "Barry Cornwall's" name was put forward, but certainly not with his consent. Samuel Rogers was thought in some quarters to have a claim, and it is said that Prince Albert did, in the first instance, sound him upon the subject, but that his great age, and a consciousness that there were more deserving claimants, induced him to decline the honour. Mr. Browning's great qualities were not without discriminating supporters, but the obscurity of his style prevented him from enjoying, at that time, much popular favour. The *Athenæum* suggested the name of Elizabeth Barrett (E. B. Browning), arguing

* "Tennyson's poems, the group of poems which closed with 'In Memoriam,' became to many of us what the 'Christian Year' was to orthodox Churchmen. We read them, and they became part of our minds, the expression in exquisite language of the feelings which were working in ourselves. Carlyle stood beside him as a prophet and teacher."—J. A. FROUDE.

that, as her position was admittedly second only to that of Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning, a lady might, under the reign of a queen, be fittingly chosen to wear the laurel. But Tennyson, besides being the popular favourite—combining, probably, more suffrages than those of all his rivals put together—was a favourite with the Queen as well. Her Majesty was understood to be very fond of the simple idyllic charm of “The Miller’s Daughter,” and Prince Albert, a fine critic, shared to the full her appreciation of Tennyson. Although, therefore, there was a good deal of controversy prior to the appointment, when made it gave very general satisfaction. Lord John Russell was Prime Minister at the time. The official warrant, which was dated November 19, 1850, and signed by the then Lord Chamberlain—Breadalbane—recites that Alfred Tennyson is “to have, hold, exercise, and enjoy all the rights, profits, and privileges of that office.” It used to be customary to give the Poet Laureate a butt of sack annually, but in the time of poet Pye this was abandoned.

Receiving the laurel “greener from the brows of him that uttered nothing base,” Lord Tennyson, like his illustrious predecessor, was not expected to do the dirty job-work which was one of the conditional duties of the office in the times of Tate, Eusden, Cibber, Whitehead, Warton, and Pye. The Laureate was no longer called upon to be “a birthday fibber,” “a scribbling, self-sold, soul-hired, scorn’d Iscariot,” and to turn out periodical tributes in verse by way of lacquey’s service to his royal employer. That the office carried with it some sort of poetical obligation was conceded, but it was a stipulation tacitly understood, if not distinctly contracted, that the Court poet was to put forth his loyal measures when and how he thought fit. The arrangement has been honourable alike to Crown and poet ; it has given to the tributes in the laureate poems a rarer quality of sincerity, and has invested the relations of Tennyson to the Court with a graceful dignity never previously attained by a Court official. The formal presentation to the Queen, in connection with the appoint-

ment, took place at the Buckingham Palace *levée* on March the 6th in the following year. Tennyson wore the same Court costume that Wordsworth had worn at his installation, and that had given him so much trouble in making into a presentable fit.

After his marriage, Tennyson lived for two years at Twickenham, in a house near the late General Peel's, Marble Hill. Carlyle refers to coming across Tennyson in Cumberland, "with his new wife," in November, 1850, when the poet stayed at Tent Lodge, Coniston, lent to him by his friend, Mr. James Marshall. It was here that poor Carlyle was prevented from sleeping by "poultry, children, and flunkeys." Of Mrs. Tennyson he gives us a little sketch: "Mrs. Tennyson," he says, "lights up bright glittering blue eyes when you speak to her; has wit, has sense; and were it not that she seems so very delicate in health, I should augur really well of Tennyson's adventure."

Twickenham had already been made famous as the residence of Alexander Pope, but the facts that Tennyson lived there, and spent there the two first years of his wedded life, contribute, as a well-known journalist has remarked, "to make the place more worthy of a pilgrimage in future days than all the memories it can boast of Walpole and of Pope." Indeed, to apply the happy phrase of the late George Cayley, Tennyson's home made Twickenham "twice classic."

Mr. Tennyson never met Mr. Landor but once or twice. At the time when Tennyson was living under the same roof as John Forster, in 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields, coming home about ten o'clock one evening, he saw Mr. Fox, the member for Oldham, standing on the top of the steps in front of the house. They shook hands, and Tennyson went into Forster's room, where Landor had been dining. In the mean time, Mr. Fox had fallen down the steps and broken his arm, and was brought into the dining-room, mute with pain, and holding the injured limb with his other hand. But old Mr. Landor, as if nothing had happened, continued eloquently discussing Catullus and the other Latin poets—

which seemed rather hard, but was better, after all, than utter silence.

It was probably Landor's example, thinks Mr. Sidney Colvin, that led Tennyson to adopt the usage of banishing the *ed* from the preterites and past participles of verbs ending with sibilant, or soft labial, or guttural consonants, and to write *wisht*, *dropt*, *lookt*, instead of wished, dropped, looked. On one occasion Landor sent him an invitation couched in the following terms :—

“ I entreat you, Alfred Tennyson,
Come and share my haunch of venison.
I have too a bin of claret
Good, but better when you share it.
Though 'tis only a small bin,
There's a stock of it within,
And as sure as I'm a rhymer,
Half a butt of Rudesheimer.
Come : among the sons of men is none
Welcomer than Alfred Tennyson.”

A few short poems were given to the world in 1851. The *Keepsake* contained a couple ; and at the valedictory dinner given to Macready, a sonnet written specially for the occasion by the Laureate was read by his friend, Mr. John Forster. Lord Tennyson did not include this sonnet in his collected works, but there are at least three lines in it worthy to live, not only as a fine compliment to Macready, but as a vigorous protest against the degenerate dramatic tastes of the day :—

“ Thine is it that our drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime,
And those gilt-gauds men-children swarm to see.”

A seventh edition of the “Poems,” published in the same year, contained one or two new pieces, and the dedicatory verses to the Queen, which originally contained a stanza relating to the Great Exhibition “in her halls of glass.” It is an incident worth recalling that the lines—

“ And statesmen at her council met
Who knew the season when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of Freedom wider yet,”

were once quoted by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons with electrical effect. Lord John Manners, for the purpose of an argument in resistance of political change, had quoted from an earlier poem the poet's description of England as—

“A land of old and wide renown,
Where Freedom broadens slowly down.”

Mr. Gladstone's retort was not weakened in an argumentative or oratorical sense by the fact that he tacked on to Lord John's quotation a passage, suitable to his own drift, from an entirely different poem.

In connection with the references personal to the poet himself in this Dedication, it is interesting to compare their finished form with the first rough draft. For instance, the second verse, now beginning “Victoria—since your Royal grace,” was originally written, “I thank you that your Royal grace”—a commonplace and almost abject phrase in comparison. The following verse was sacrificed in proof—

“Nor should I dare to flatter state,
Nor such a lay would you receive
Were I to shape it, who believe
Your nature true as you are great.”

The next verse underwent considerable changes in the unsatisfied longing for the perfect form. Here is the verse as it originally stood, the MS. corrections being added in brackets :—

“But if [should] your greatness, and the care
That yokes with splendour, yield you time
To seek in [question] this your Laureate's [Poet's] rhyme
For [if] aught of good or noble [graceful] [sweet be] there.”

In proof, further revision was employed, and the finished verse ultimately stood thus :—

“And should your greatness, and the care
That yokes with empire, yield you time
To make demand of modern rhyme
If aught of ancient worth be there.”

The autumn of 1851 was partly spent by Mr. Tennyson and his wife abroad, and their journey, beginning in the Western Riviera, is described in “The Daisy.” Carlyle, in

a letter to Emerson, says: "Alfred Tennyson, perhaps you heard, is gone to Italy with his wife; their baby died; they found England wearisome. Alfred has been taken up on the top of the wave, and a good deal jumbled about since you were here." Respecting this continental trip, the Brownings, says Miss Mitford in a letter written in September, on their way from Italy to England, stopped in Paris, and in the Louvre they thought they saw Alfred Tennyson. "Looking in the visitors'-book, they found his name written—"A. Tennyson, Rentier."

In December, 1851, Louis Napoleon, by an act of treachery which has been fittingly characterized as a crime, abolished the constitution of the French Republic. The *coup d'état* bequeathed a legacy of uneasiness to England. Public feeling on this side of the Channel was represented by the brilliant letters of "An Englishman" in the *Times*, in which Louis Napoleon's aims and methods were subjected to the most scathing invective. This distrust of the French President was intensified by public discussions as to our "preparedness" for war. The year 1852 opened with the gloom of "the days of December" hanging over it. An undefinable apprehension of danger was in the air. Criticism of events in the French capital was carried to lengths which put a strain upon the diplomatic relations of the two countries. Tennyson shared to the full the popular view. He was alive to the inadequacy of our national defences; he held in righteous abhorrence the career and conduct of the *parvenu* whose influence in France was then paramount. Probably in both respects he was very near the truth. The fact that a large volunteer force has since been established justified the one view; the career and character of the Emperor of the French more than justified the other. Feeling strongly on both points, he threw the influence of his genius into the scale of popular opinion. In two consecutive numbers of the *Examiner* were published three patriotic pieces, two of them with the *nom de plume* of "Merlin." The first, called "Britons, guard your own," appeared at the end of January, and, although a little rough

in workmanship, struck the key-note of the movement which ultimately ripened into an organized scheme of national defence. The sentiment pervading the lines was the same that afterwards served as a motto for our volunteer army—"Defence, not defiance." A couple of verses may, perhaps, be quoted:—

“Peace-lovers we, sweet Peace we all desire,
 Peace-lovers we, but who can trust a liar?
 Peace-lovers, haters
 Of shameless traitors;
 We hate not France, but this man’s heart of stone:
 Britons, guard your own.

“Call home your ships across Biscayan tides,
 To blow the battle from their oaken sides.
 Why waste they yonder
 Their idle thunder?
 Why stay there to guard a foreign throne?
 Seamen, guard your own.”

The next week, the striking verses, “The Third of February,” and the patriotic lyric, “Hands all round,” appeared. The former, which has since been published in the Works, was a powerful rebuke to the House of Lords for having deprecated the free criticism expressed in newspapers and in speeches against the author of the *coup d’état*. These grand lines, breathing in every fibre of their sinewy strength the spirit of independence, well deserved to be rescued from the pages of a defunct periodical. Of “Hands all round,” we are to hear something thirty years later.

Tennyson’s opinion of the Emperor of the French did not change. He held him always in the same moral detestation—a sentiment shared by Thomas Carlyle, whose views on public questions were often in singular accord with his own. But it must be borne in mind that Tennyson was now the Court poet, and the open avowal of feelings hostile to the government *de facto* of France might have been construed in a way compromising to the Court itself. Hence, probably, the anonymity of the pieces just referred to. Only two or three years later, the same Louis Napoleon was England’s ally on the battle-fields of the Crimea; a circumstance which

of itself completely accounts for the oblivion in which the best of the three poems was suffered to lie until after the collapse of his power.

In the early part of 1852, we find Tennyson at Malvern with his wife. The Carlyles, Sydney Dobell, and Dr. Westland Marston were also staying there, and many were the walks these kindred spirits had over the hills together, and many the sinewy arguments on all sorts of abstruse and knotty points. Later in the year, Hallam Tennyson, the poet's eldest son, was born at Twickenham, and there christened; Mr. Hallam and the Rev. F. D. Maurice standing godfathers, Thackeray, among others, being present at the ceremony. Maurice notices the invitation in a letter of Sept. 29, 1852: "Alfred Tennyson has done me the high honour of asking me to be godfather to his child. . . . I accept the office with thankfulness and fear. It was to please his wife."

For a long while before this, Tennyson had been on terms of cordial intimacy with Thackeray. They had been contemporaries at Cambridge, but it was their kinship in literary tastes, rather than the survival of an ancient college friendship, that brought them together in after-life. At what time their acquaintance ripened into intimacy it might be difficult to determine with any precise regard for chronological accuracy.

Mrs. Ritchie, Thackeray's eldest daughter, remembers Tennyson dining at her father's house when she was propped up in a tall chair between her parents. "I can remember," she says, "on one occasion, through a cloud of smoke, looking across a darkening room at the noble, grave head of the Poet Laureate. He was sitting near my father in the twilight, after some family meal in the old house at Kensington. It is Mr. Tennyson himself who has reminded me how, upon this occasion, while my father was speaking to me, my little sister looked up suddenly from the book over which she had been absorbed, saying, in her sweet childish voice, 'Papa, why do you not write books like *Nicholas Nickleby*?' Then again I seem to hear, across

the same familiar table, voices without shape or name, talking and telling each other that Mr. Tennyson was married—that he and his wife had been met walking on the terrace at Clevedon Court; and then the clouds descend again, except, indeed, that I still see my father riding off on his brown cob to Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson's house at Twickenham, to attend the christening of Hallam, their eldest son."

The incidents of the next year or two are meagre. In November, 1852, the Duke of Wellington died; and on the day of his burial Tennyson's noble tribute to the "last great Englishman"—"the great World-victor's victor"—was published. In connection with this poem the following correspondence passed between Sir Henry Taylor and the poet:—

"MORTLAKE, *November 17, 1852.*

"MY DEAR TENNYSON,

"I have read your ode (Death of the Duke of Wellington), and I believe that many thousands at present, and that many hundreds of thousands in future times, will feel about it as I do, or with a yet stronger and deeper feeling; and I am sure that every one will feel about it according to his capacity of feeling what is great and true. It has a greatness worthy of its theme, and an absolute simplicity and truth, with all the poetic passion of your nature moving beneath."

"SEAFORD HOUSE, SEAFORD,

"*November 23, 1852.*

"Thanks, thanks! I have just returned from Reading, and found your letter. In the all but universal depreciation of my ode by the Press, the prompt and hearty approval of it by a man as true as the Duke himself is doubly grateful.

"Ever, my dear Taylor, yours,

"A. TENNYSON."

In the same year, Messrs. Parker & Son, anxious to

obtain the opinions of the leading authors on the book-selling question, sent out circulars with this object. Tennyson's reply was, "I am for free-trade in the book-selling question, as in other things."

The year 1853 produced nothing new of importance from his pen. Indeed, at this time the *sacra fames* for literary production may have moderated its fierceness in the presence of rival interests. There was a year-old baby, "crazy with laughter and babble and earth's new wine," to share his attention. In this same year Miss Mitford relates that Tennyson had recently been staying with Charles Kingsley, "improved by the birth of his child." The Tennysons were then looking out for a house, and Miss Mitford was anxious that they should choose one in her own neighbourhood. Ultimately, however, they went to live at Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight. The year 1854 was, again, a period of comparative rest, yielding but one short poem, though that in its way was a notable one, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." As a matter of military record, the charge of the Heavy Brigade was even a more memorable exploit than that of the gallant Six Hundred, but it was not until many years later that the Laureate commemorated that heroic episode. The first and better known piece has undergone several alterations. In spite of some evidence of hasty composition, it has always been a great favourite with the English people, partly because the brave deed it records with such fire is one of which no one can help being proud. In the following year, the final version was printed on a quarto sheet of four pages, with this note at the bottom :

"Having heard that the brave soldiers before Sebastopol, whom I am proud to call my countrymen, have a liking for my Ballad on the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, I have ordered a thousand copies of it to be printed for them. No writing of mine can add to the glory they have acquired in the Crimea ; but if what I have heard be true, they will not be displeased to receive these copies of the Ballad from me, and to know that those who sit at home love and honour them.—ALFRED TENNYSON, 8th August, 1855."

CHAPTER VII.

SOME time before this, Tennyson had made the acquaintance of Sir John Simeon, a gentleman of refined tastes, and a rare urbanity of disposition, which won for him the poetic epithet of "prince of courtesy." The introduction was brought about by Carlyle, at Bath House, when the Chelsea sage made the oft-quoted speech, "There he sits upon a dung-heap, surrounded by innumerable dead dogs"—his expressive if not very elegant way of referring to the poet's classical studies. "I was told of this," said Mr. Tennyson on one occasion, "and, some time after, I repeated it to Carlyle: 'I'm told that is what you say of me.' He gave a kind of guffaw. 'Eh, that wasn't a very luminous description of you,' he answered."* Sir John Simeon and Tennyson became frequent companions after the latter's removal to the Isle of Wight, and there was constant intercourse between Swainston and Farringford.

Allusion has already been made to the Laureate's intimacy with Maurice, that bold thinker and gentle soul, who in theological speculation exerted such a powerful influence upon contemporary schools of opinion. This was one of the close and sacred intimacies of the poet's life, as may be judged from the relationship in which Mr. Maurice stood to his eldest boy, Hallam. In 1854, Maurice published his well-known volume of "Theological Essays," which he dedicated to the Laureate in the following graceful terms:—

"To Alfred Tennyson, Esq., Poet Laureate.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have maintained in these Essays that a Theology which does not correspond to the deepest thoughts and feelings of human beings cannot be a true Theology. Your writings have taught me to enter into many of those thoughts and feelings. Will you forgive me the presump-

* *Harper's Magazine.*

tion of offering you a book which at least acknowledges them, and does them homage?

"As the hopes which I have expressed in this volume are more likely to be fulfilled to our children than to ourselves, I might perhaps ask you to accept it as a present to one of your name, in whom you have given me a very sacred interest. Many years, I trust, will elapse before he knows that there are any controversies in the world into which he has entered. Would to God that in a few more he may find that they have ceased! At all events, if he should ever look into these Essays, they may tell him what meaning some of the former generation attached to words, which will be familiar and dear to his generation, and to those that follow his,—how there were some who longed that the bells of our churches might indeed

" ' Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.'

"Believe me, my dear sir,

"Yours very truly and gratefully,

"F. D. MAURICE."

The Tennysons were now happily established in their home near Freshwater. In a poetic invitation to Mr. Maurice, the Laureate bids him welcome to the Isle of Wight,—

"Where, far from noise and smoke of town,
I watch the twilight falling brown
All round a careless-ordered garden
Close to the ridge of a noble down.

* * * *

"For groves of pine on either hand,
To break the blast of winter, stand;
And further on, the hoary Channel
Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand."

In the Life of Mr. Maurice, edited by his son, we read: "The post, one morning, brought me a letter containing the Poet Laureate's lines of sympathy, and the invitation to visit my young godson, which Whewell declared to be the most perfect specimen of its kind in the language."

The situation of the new residence was well chosen for a

poet's home. In spring the neighbouring woods are full of anemones and primroses; narcissus grows wild in the fields; flowers brighten the hedgerows and beautify the lanes; the thrushes and blackbirds make the heart of man glad with their infectious melody. Thirty or forty years ago the ubiquitous tourist had not mastered the art of vulgar inquisitiveness, and the "cheap tripper" had not become the curse of every one who had grown famous. The surroundings of Farringford formed an environment worthy of a poet's genius. Behind the house there is a hill called "Mr. Tennyson's Down," on the summit of which stands Farringford Beacon. On these glorious breezy expanses, and in the primrose dells below, Lord Tennyson spent hours of silent reverie, and in and about Farringford have been bodied forth the characters of many of his finest works—especially under the shelter of the picturesque summer-house to which the rustic bridge across the road gives access. The field in which this summer-house stands bears the name of "Maiden's Croft," in allusion to the Mother of Jesus—the whole estate of Farringford having at one time formed part of a priory dedicated to the Virgin Mary. An old legend relates how, somewhere in these priory grounds, there exists a subterranean and submarine passage to France, which, if re-opened, would form a ready-made Channel tunnel that would furnish England with money instead of costing a vast sum; for the legend goes on to tell how enormous hoards of gold lie piled up in this underground passage, over which a monstrous gryphon is keeping sleepless guard, so that no mortal has hitherto been able either to penetrate to France or to appropriate the treasure; and though many luckless wights have made the attempt, they have all either perished in these gloomy abodes of darkness, or else have just retained strength enough to crawl back to the abodes of their fellow-men and tell their tale of the ghostly horrors they saw ere they fell down dead with fright. Though Lord Tennyson did not succeed in re-opening this mystic passage, he made several finds of objects of antiquarian value, in which

he took an interest only second to his love for nature. His poems, in almost every page, bear striking testimony to the closeness of his communings with nature. No poet, not even Wordsworth, has shown a more observant eye for the wonders of earth and air. His poems teem with similes taken from the fields, the rocks, the trees, the flowers. All things animate and inanimate were laid under contribution by a mind which missed no single fact, and which cherished "a sense of the infinitude and the mystery, as well as of the mere beauty of wayside things." "Our poet," writes a privileged friend, "can see farther than most people. Almost the first time I ever walked out with him, he told me to look and tell him if the field-lark did not come down sideways upon its wing."

To such an admirer of nature, the tribute paid to him in the spring of 1854 by E. K. Kane, the American Arctic explorer, was most gratifying. The occasion on which it was rendered is thus referred to in the first volume of his "Arctic Explorations": "The most picturesque portion of the North Greenland coast is to be found after leaving Cape George Russell, and approaching Dallas Bay. The red sandstones contrast most favourably with the blank whiteness, associating the cold tints of the dreary Arctic landscape with the warm colouring of more southern lands. The seasons have acted on the different layers of the cliff, so as to give them the appearance of jointed masonry, and the narrow line of greenstone at the top caps them with well-simulated battlements. One of these interesting freaks of nature became known to us as the 'Three Brother Turrets.' The sloping rubbish at the foot of the coast-wall led up, like an artificial causeway, to a gorge that was streaming at noonday with the southern sun, whilst everywhere else the rock stood out in the blackest shadow. Just at the edge of this bright opening rose the dreamy semblance of a castle, flanked with triple towers, completely isolated and defined. These were the 'Three Brother Turrets.'

"I was still more struck," continues Dr. Kane, "with another of the same sort, in the immediate neighbourhood

of my halting-ground beyond Sunny Gorge, to the north of latitude 79°. A single cliff of greenstone, marked by the slaty limestone that once encased it, rears itself from a crumbled base of sandstones, like the boldly chiselled rampart of an ancient city. At its northern extremity, on the brink of a deep ravine which has worn its way among the ruins, there stands a solitary column or minaret-tower, as sharply finished as if it had been cast for the Place Vendôme. Yet the length of the shaft alone is 480 feet, and it rises on a plinth or pedestal itself 280 feet high.

"I remember well the emotions of my party as it first broke upon our view. Cold and sick as I was, I brought back a sketch of it,* which may have interest for the reader, though it scarcely suggests the imposing dignity of this magnificent landmark. Those who are happily familiar with writings of Tennyson, and have communed with his spirit in the solitudes of a wilderness, will apprehend the impulse that inscribed the scene with his name."

A cape in these same ice-bound regions, and a lake in New Zealand, have also been called after the Laureate.

In the year following Maurice's dedication of his book, and Kane's dedication of the marvellous natural monument discovered by him, another high compliment was paid to the Laureate. The University of Oxford, which reserves such distinctions for men of the very foremost mark, conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.C.L. We are told by one who was present at the ceremony that, although his colleagues in this honour were Sir De Lacy Evans and Sir John Burgoyne, just returned from their victorious exploits in the Crimea, the enthusiasm with which he was received had never been surpassed.

The same year was signalized by the production of "Maud." This remarkable poem grew out of a remark

* A beautiful full-page steel engraving from this sketch, which reminds one of Doré's most striking illustrations to Dante's "*Divina Commedia*," faces the letterpress, and is entitled "Tennyson's Monument."

of Sir John Simeon's, who thought that the lines—

“ O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain,”

—exquisite though they were in feeling and music—wanted something to explain their story. Out of this suggestion, and by degrees, it all grew. Mrs. Ritchie tells a story, on the authority of Henry Sidgwick, which must be quoted in connection with the composition of “Maud.” “Mr. Tennyson was reading the poem to a silent company assembled in the twilight, and when he got to ‘the birds in the high hall garden calling, Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,’ he stopped short, and asked an authoress who happened to be present what birds these were. The authoress, much alarmed, and feeling that she must speak, and that the eyes of the whole company were upon her, faltered out, ‘Nightingales, sir.’ ‘Pooh,’ replied Tennyson, ‘what a cockney you are! Nightingales don’t say Maud. Rooks do, or something like it. Caw, caw, caw, caw, caw.’ Then he went on reading. Reading, is it? One can hardly describe it. It is a sort of mystical incantation, a chant in which every note rises and falls and reverberates again. As we sit around the twilight room at Farringford, with its great oriel-window looking to the garden, across fields of hyacinth and self-sowed daffodils toward the sea, where the waves wash against the rock, we seem carried by a tide not unlike the ocean’s sound; it fills the room, it ebbs and flows away; and when we leave, it is with a strange music in our ears.”

It was a custom of Lord Tennyson’s to thus read his poems to intimate friends for whose critical judgment he had respect. “Before ‘Maud’ was printed,” says a writer in *Chambers’s Journal*, “Tennyson used to come and read it aloud to Mrs. Carlyle, and ask her what she thought of it. Her reply the first time was, ‘I think it is perfect stuff!’ Slightly discouraged by this remark, the Laureate read it once more; upon which Mrs. Carlyle remarked, ‘It sounds better this time’; and on being read to her the third time, she was obliged to confess that she liked it very much.

This little incident shows how Tennyson must have valued her clear judgment and excellent taste." Yet another of these readings took place at 13, Dorset Street, there being present Mr. Browning, Mrs. E. B. Browning, Miss Arabella Browning, and Mr. D. G. Rossetti.* It was on this occasion that Mr. Rossetti made the furtive pen-and-ink sketch of the poet which, passing into the hands of Mr. Browning, was carefully preserved, and was exhibited, after the artist's death, among his works.

Sir F. Pollock, in his *Reminiscences*, says : " One day we drove to Freshwater, where Tennyson had not long taken up his abode at Farringford, and spent the evening with him and his wife. He read us out part of 'Maud,' not then published, and before we left them to go to our quarters, we were taken upstairs to see the beautiful sight of their two handsome boys, Hallam and Lionel, asleep in bed. We spent some hours the next day at Farringford, and had the rest of 'Maud' read to us in the garden ; took an early dinner with the Tennysons, and drove back to Ventnor."

When "Maud" was published it met with a very adverse reception. In later editions, considerable alterations have been made ; the poem is now described as a monodrama, and we are thus put in a clearer position as to the limitations of its dramatic character ; it is divided into three parts, and the alterations of mood are thus made more comprehensible ; additions have been made to give lucidity to the narrative ; and in the conclusion the death of the heroine is removed from the region of doubt by a distinct statement of the fact. Regarding "Maud" in its perfected form, and by the light of a dispassionate judgment, it is altogether impossible to account for the violence with which it was assailed, on its first appearance, by some of the recognized organs of critical opinion. Very many passages in it are strikingly beautiful. There runs throughout the poem a nervous energy, a passionate fibre, which no previous work of Tennyson's, if we except "Locksley Hall," had

* Mr. Rossetti, as we learn from Mr. William Sharp, his biographer, held Tennyson to be "the greatest poet of the period."

exhibited. The critics who had complained of his dilettante style, his drawing-room *conchetti*, and what they were pleased to consider a certain namby-pambyism of sentiment, were now horrified because he put into the mouth of a suppositive narrator a fierce rush of bitter selfishness, and the wild outbursts of mental disorder. That the poem was in some parts nebulous and obscure—that the attempts to convey the misanthropical mood now and then verged on the hysterical—may, perhaps, be conceded, though these faults, if they existed, were due to want of clearness in arrangement, and to the exigencies of the monodramatic form, rather than to any weakness of treatment in the poem itself. On the contrary, where it erred, it erred in the exhibition of a superabundant strength. The poetic fire burnt so fiercely that the measure now and again seemed to be harsh and broken. Perhaps, too, the main thread of the narrative was invested with a deeper gloom than suited the popular taste. No story of modern times has been wrapped in a more depressing garb of tragic circumstance. The love of a poor man for a wealthy maiden generally has, in itself, some of the essentials of sorrowful romance; but when, as in the case of Maud, the girl's father has been in past days the cause of the ruin and suicide of her lover's father, the atmosphere seems to be charged with the omens of a coming catastrophe. The crisis, as all readers of the poem know, arrives in the shape of a scornful brother, who, abruptly breaking in upon a stolen interview of the lovers, gives provocation which leads to a duel, in which he is slain. Nothing could be more finely conceived than such a situation for the development of remorse and despair, and the terrible crushing of young affections beneath the iron heel of Fate, which ultimately ends in the death of Maud herself.

In a more strictly dramatic form, the theme would have lent itself to powerful characterization. As it is, the force of the narrative is lessened somewhat by the circumstance of there being but one speaker, who has to be the vehicle of a rush of ever-varying moods of passion, from that of tenderest wooing

to that of incoherent mania. But if the analytic and reflective powers are not so minute as in "In Memoriam," the fluctuations of feeling that lie near the surface are depicted with a far more impassioned force. One seems to be listening—now to the fervid music of devotion, and now to the uncontrolled ravings of a heart made bitter by the intensity of its remorse and sorrow. Tennyson has nowhere compassed a greater vehemence of emotional expression than in this work, which reveals capabilities of tragic force on a higher plane than he before, or afterwards, attempted.

When the work came out, the curious misapprehension was made, in many quarters, that the poet was speaking his own thoughts in the character of his fictitious hero. In the case of a writer like Tennyson, who has not infrequently put his feelings into verse for the public, it may not always be an easy matter to tell how much is his own utterance, and how much is due to the requirements of the quasi-dramatic form. The hero of "Maud" declaims against the deep-rooted selfishness of our times, and the emasculating influence of trade, and shouts for—

"War ! loud war by land and by sea,
War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones";
and he seems to revel in the declaration that—

"No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
And watch the harvest ripen, her herd increase,
Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore,
And the cobweb woven across the cannon's throat
Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more."

These and similar passages, glorifying war, were stupidly assumed to be the poet's own views. There was not a scintilla of justification for such a conclusion. It is not he, but the puppet of his fancy, who speaks. In his lucid intervals, the slayer of Maud's brother feels the craving for action which robust minds tortured with a consuming sorrow often experience, and he regards war, which promises to bring solace to his own heart, as a panacea for the thousand ills around him—ills which, as he blindly reasons, are the outcome of an enervating and degrading peace. It

was, perhaps, unfortunate that these sentiments should have been given to the world at a time when the horrors and sufferings incidental to the Crimean campaign, and the prolonged siege of Sebastopol, were hardly at an end, and when, to use Mr. Bright's fine figure, "the Angel of Death was abroad in the land, and you might almost hear the beating of his wings." Some malicious persons even went so far as to declare that passages in the poem—such as "this broad-brimmed hawker of holy things"—were personal references to Mr. Bright; but Tennyson, on hearing it, warmly repudiated the accusation. The general tone of the current criticism attributed the savage joy in which the narrator spoke of war, and his scorn of the piping times of peace, to Tennyson himself, and sharp, if not strictly logical, were the rebukes he had to endure. In the present day we can look at the poem without our mental vision being obscured by the mists of misconception and prejudice. We can, if we be men of peace, calmly console ourselves that all these vapourings about war are really part of the development of the character which the Laureate had set himself to depict. "I must mix myself with action lest I wither by despair," says the hero of "Locksley Hall"; and the same yearning, put into different words, constitutes the burden of those martial utterances which aroused such a tempest of critical condemnation when "Maud" first appeared.

The key-note to the harsh reception of the poem was sounded by the *Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Literary Gazette*, the *Guardian*, and the *Dispatch*. The *Times* was especially savage in its tone. *Blackwood* and the *Edinburgh Review* were also strong in their dispraise; and so fiercely did the current run against the Laureate's supposed advocacy of war, that a protest, entitled "Vindiciæ Pacis," was addressed to him by name, and some obscure writer rushed into print with a so-called "Anti-Maud." Dr. R. J. Mann, however, came forward with an explanatory essay by way of vindicating Tennyson's work, and so satisfactorily was the work of explanation performed, that the poet, in acknow-

ledging the service, said, "No one with this essay before him can in future pretend to misunderstand my dramatic poem 'Maud.' Your commentary is as true as it is full." Dr. Mann's pamphlet lays stress upon the dramatic character of the poem, which must not be taken as expressing the poet's own mind, and repudiates in the strongest way any reference to Mr. John Bright.

There can be no question, however, that Mr. Bright did take the references to himself, and in one of his Manchester speeches, although with marked courtesy and forbearance, he retorted on the poet. The following letter bearing on the subject confirms to some extent this view:—

" REFORM CLUB,
" November 5, 1884.

" DEAR SIR,

" I cannot tell you the date of the speech you refer to, nor can I give an opinion as to what was thought of the poem at the time. I must have understood it as offensive to the Peace party, or I should not have referred to it in the terms I employed, though now I cannot quote what I said about it.

" Yours very truly,
" JOHN BRIGHT.

" MR. H. J. JENNINGS."

In replying to a gentleman who had sent him a copy of a review of a favourable kind, Tennyson wrote the following letter:—

" FRESHWATER, I. W.,
" Monday, August 26, 1855.

" DEAR SIR,

" I am much obliged to you for sending me your critique on my poem; and happy to find that you approve of it, and, unlike most of the critics (so-called), have taken some pains to look into it and see what it means. There has been from many quarters a torrent of abuse against it; and I have even had insulting anonymous letters: indeed, I am quite at a loss to account for the bitterness of feeling

which this poor little work of mine has excited. Yesterday, with your kind letter, came also the notice in the *Times*, by the Rev. Robert Aris Wilmot (I believe). I suppose you have seen it: to make any comment on it whatever were waste of ink.

“Thanking you again,

“Believe me, dear sir, yours truly,

“A. TENNYSON.”

Few of Lord Tennyson's poems have undergone more revision and re-revision than “Maud.” The original MS. shows that it was not altogether his intention to make the lover feel such a deep contempt for his rival. The following passages, which were deleted in proof, are to some extent evidence of this:—

“Will she smile if he presses her hand,
This Lord-Captain up at the hall?
Captain? he to hold a command!
He can hold a cue, he can pocket a ball;
And sure not a bantam cockrel lives
With a weaker crow upon English land,
Whether he boast of a horse that gains,
Or cackle his own applause. . . .”

“Bought commission! can such as he
Be wholesome guards for an English throne;
When if France but make a lunge, why she,
God knows, might prick us to the backbone.”

“What use for a single mouth to rage
At the rotten creak of the State machine?
Tho' it makes friend weep and enemy smile,
That here in the face of a watchful age,
The sons of a graybeard-ridden isle
Should dance in a round of old routine,
While a few great families lead the reels,
And pauper manhood lies in the dirt,
And Favour and Wealth with gilded heels
Trample service and tried desert.”

Sydney Dobell made notes for a refutation of the adverse criticisms upon his friend's poem, but they were never put into shape, and the memoranda were found among his papers after his death. Dobell was in the Isle of Wight in 1857, for the benefit of his health. In the previous year he had published a volume of poems which received Tennyson's approbation, especially “Grass from the Battle-field,” of

which he spoke highly. From a letter written by Dobell to one of his correspondents we get the following anecdote, which, in different shapes, has become one of the Tennyson traditions: "We have had many cloudy days lately, but even they have been almost equally abnormal—soft, shady days, with south-west winds, as tender often as spring, and with thrushes singing in all the hedges, in a way that, at another season, would be so exquisite, but now, in the very death and funeral of the year, is sad enough, because unnatural. I hardly think Tennyson has done well, as a poet, in fixing his house in such exceptional conditions. He lives, you know, about twenty miles from us, along the same coast. The country people are much amazed at his bad hat and his unusual ways, and believe devoutly that he writes his poetry while mowing the lawn. However, they hold him in great respect, from a perception of the honour in which he is held by their 'betters.' Our housewife here is a friend of his servant, and she entertained us with an account of how said servant had lately been awed. Opening to a ring at the door, when the Tennysons were out, she saw a 'tall handsome gentleman' standing there, who, on learning they were not at home, turned to go. 'What message shall I give?' quoth the maid. 'Merely say Prince Albert called.'"

In the same year, Bayard Taylor, the American author, paid a visit to Farringford, and has left his impressions on record: "I had so long known the greatest of English poets, not only through his works, but from the talk of mutual friends, that I gladly embraced an opportunity to know him personally, which happened to me in June, 1857. He was then living at his home, the estate of Farringford, near Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight. I should have hesitated to intrude upon his retirement, had I not been kindly assured beforehand that my visit would not be unwelcome. The drive across the heart of the island, from Newport to Freshwater, was alone worth the journey from London. The softly undulating hills, the deep green valleys, the blue waters of the Solent, and the purple

glimpses of the New Forest beyond, formed a fit vestibule of landscape through which to approach a poet's house. As we drew near Freshwater, my coachman pointed out Farringford—a cheerful gray country mansion with a small thick-grassed park before it, a grove behind, and, beyond all, the deep shoulder of the chalk downs, a gap in which, at Freshwater, showed the dark blue horizon of the Channel. Leaving my luggage at one of the two little inns, I walked to the house with lines from 'Maud' chiming in my mind. 'The dry-tongued laurel' shone glossily in the sun, the cedar 'sighed for Lebanon' on the lawn, and 'the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea' glimmered afar. I had not been two minutes in the drawing-room before Tennyson walked in. So unlike are the published portraits of him, that I was almost in doubt as to his identity. The engraved head suggests a moderate stature, but he is tall and broad-shouldered as a son of Anak, with hair, beard, and eyes of Southern darkness. Something in the lofty brow and aquiline nose suggests Dante, but such a deep, mellow chest-voice never could have come from Italian lungs. He proposed a walk, as the day was wonderfully clear and beautiful. We climbed the steep comb of the chalk cliff, and slowly wandered westward until we reached the Needles, at the extremity of the island, and some three or four miles distant from his residence. During the conversation with which we beguiled the way, I was struck with the variety of his knowledge. Not a little flower on the downs, which the sheep had spared, escaped his notice; and the geology of the coast, both terrestrial and submarine, was perfectly familiar to him. I thought of a remark I once heard from the lips of a distinguished English author, that Tennyson was the wisest man he knew, and could well believe that he was sincere in making it. I shall respect the sanctity of the delightful family circle to which I was admitted, and from which I parted the next afternoon with true regret. Suffice it to say that the poet is not only fortunate and happy in his family relations, but that, with his large and liberal nature, his sympathies for what is true

and noble in humanity, and his depth and tenderness of feeling, he deserves to be so." The distinguished Englishman referred to in this extract was Thackeray, whose critical admiration of Tennyson was none the less sincere for being blended with a strong personal regard.

While Tennyson's home was the shrine of many pilgrimages, he himself was the object of a good deal of wonder to the country folks in the neighbourhood. His slouched hat somewhat shocked their sense of propriety. His mysterious cloak invested him, in their eyes, with a kind of supernaturalness. That they had rather vague ideas of his occupation, when taking his solitary walks, is illustrated by the answer a Freshwater boy made to a lady who asked him if he knew Mr. Tennyson. "He makes poets for the Queen," said the boy. "What do you mean?" said the lady. "I don't know what they means," said the boy, "but p'liceman often sees him walking about a-making of 'em under the stars."

In 1857 we find Tennyson paying a visit to Manchester, where his friend Woolner's bust of him was on view at the exhibition.* By a coincidence, Nathaniel Hawthorne

* The work is now in the vestibule of the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. At first, the Dons refused to give it a place there, on the ground that the subject of it was still living. This refusal on their part led to the following *jeu d'esprit* by the late Tom Taylor, in which the poet's style is happily parodied:—

"So the stately bust abode
For many a month, unseen, among the Dons.
Nor in the lodge, nor in the library,
Upon its pedestal appeared, to be
A mark of reverence and green gownsman-hood,
Of grief to ancient fogies, and reproof
To those who knew not Alfred, being hard
And narrowed in their honour to old names
Of poets, who had vogue when *they* were young,
And not admitting later bards; but now,
Last week, a rumour widely blown about,
Walking the windy circle of the Press,
Came, to stern Whewell, with the Seniors,
Who rule the destinies of Trinity,
Had of the sanctuary barred access
Unto the bust of Alfred Tennyson,
By Woolner carved, subscribed for by the youth
Who loved the poet, hoped to see him set
Within the library of Trinity,

happened to be in the exhibition at the same time as Tennyson, and he has left on record his impressions of the occasion. "Gazing at him with all my eyes," he says, "I liked him well, and rejoiced more in him than in all the wonders of the exhibition." Hawthorne's flying sketch contributes nothing to the portraiture of the poet, except in the one negative characteristic that he was "as un-

One great man more o' the house, among the great,
 Who grace that still Valhalla, ranged in row,
 Along the chequered marbles of the floor,
 Two stately ranks—to where the fragrant limes
 Look thro' the far-end window, cool and green.
 A band it is, of high companionship,—
 Chief, Newton, and the broad-browed Verulam,
 And others only less than these in arts
 Or science : names that England holds on high.
 Among whom, hoped the youth, would soon be set
 The living likeness of a living Bard,—
 Great Alfred Tennyson, the Laureate,
 Whom Trinity most loves of living sons.
 But other thought had Whewell and the Dons,
 Deeming such honour only due to those
 Upon whose greatness Death has set his seal.
 So fixed their bans hard, and shut the doors
 Upon the living poet : for, said one,
 'It is too soon'; and when they heard the phrase,
 Others caught up the cue, and chorussed it,
 Until the poet, echoing, 'Soon ? too soon ?'
 As if in wrath, Whewell looked up and said :

'O Laureate, if indeed you list to try,
 Try, and unfix our purpose in this thing.'
 Whereat full shrilly sang th' excluded bard :
 'Soon, soon, so soon ! Whewell looks stern and chill !
 Soon, soon, so soon ! but I can enter still.
 'Too soon, too soon ! You cannot enter now.'

'I am not dead ; of that I do repent.
 But to my living prayer, oh now relent :'
 'Too soon, too soon ! You cannot enter now.'

'Honour in life is sweet : my fame is wide.
 Let me stand at Dryden's, Byron's side.'
 'Too soon, too soon ! You cannot enter now !'

'Honour that comes in life is rare as sweet ;
 I cannot taste it long : for life is fleet.'
 'No, no, too soon ! You cannot enter now !'

So sang the Laureate, while all stonily,
 Their chins upon their hands, as men that had
 No entrails to be moved, sat the stern Dons."

English as possible,* and great abnormally." The two men of genius were not, unfortunately, introduced to each other. Hawthorne was too shy to seek an introduction, and Tennyson did not know he was in the rooms. When he heard of the circumstance afterwards, the Laureate, in a frank and hearty manner, said, "Why didn't he come up and let me shake hands with him? I am sure I should have been glad to meet a man like Hawthorne anywhere."

Between the publication of "Maud" and the first instalment of the "Idylls of the King," Tennyson added very little to his printed work; but, in the retirement of Farringford, he was elaborating the great poems which, in the opinion of some competent judges, and probably in his own, constituted his highest claim to permanence in the poetry of the country. A reference is, perhaps, justifiable to some *vers d'occasion* which, in the spring of 1859, appeared in the *Times*, with the signature of "T.," and which were by the Laureate. The resonant spirit of the lines, coupled with the fact that they enunciated the views as to the need for a citizen army of which he was always the avowed advocate, left little room for doubt that the popular conjecture as to the authorship was well-founded. Coming immediately after the outbreak of hostilities between France and Austria, and when the possibilities of Gallic aggression loomed large upon the public imagination, they gave a strong impetus to the volunteer movement. Three days later, a notice was issued from the War Office sanctioning the formation of rifle corps, and "T.'s" vigorous appeal, "Riflemen, form!" was responded to with alacrity throughout Great Britain. How the movement has prospered, our splendid army of 200,000 citizen soldiers, available for the purpose of home defence, triumphantly testifies. Lord Tennyson took a consistent and patriotic interest in the

* When Tennyson, with his bronzed face and dark curling locks, first went to the South of France, in company with Arthur Hallam, and came to Bordeaux, a touter thrust into his hand a Spanish card, which he put aside, whereupon the touter gave him an Italian card—which he also rejected; then a French card; and at last he said, "Est-ce que c'est possible que vous êtes Anglais?"

volunteers. Some years later a fresh proof of this interest was furnished, in a letter he wrote to Colonel Richards, who had taken a prominent part in originating the enterprise. "I most heartily congratulate you," said the Laureate, "on your having been able to do so much for your country; and I hope that you will not cease from your labours until it is the law of the land that every male child in it shall be trained to the use of arms."

Meanwhile, a second son, Lionel, had been born in 1854.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHETHER the idea of the Arthurian series in its present complete form had, at that time, taken possession of Tennyson's mind, must remain for most of us a matter of speculation. A tradition is extant that, when he was little more than a boy, he chanced to meet with a copy of Sir Thomas Malory's "King Arthur," which filled him with an enthusiastic desire to make the Round Table the subject of a great poem. That his interests very early ran in this direction is proved by some of his novitiate efforts. The germ of "Elaine," for instance, may be found in "The Lady of Shalott," published in his college days; and in the poems of 1842 appeared "Morte d'Arthur," "Sir Galahad," and "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere." The two last named are short pieces, and have no special reference to the "Idylls," except in so far as they show an inclination to deal with the Arthurian romance some years before it shaped itself into a great and eventful project. Although the first four "Idylls" did not appear until 1859, a tentative version of "Enid" and "Vivien," under the title of "Enid and Nimue, or the True and the False," was privately printed two years earlier; and by the middle of 1858, Tennyson had a third poem—the detection of Guinevere and the last interview with Arthur—sufficiently advanced to read to Arthur Hugh Clough, who spent some time, during the last years of his prematurely closing life,

in the genial companionship of the master of Farringford. The privately printed volume was speedily withdrawn for extensive alterations. The four poems, "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere," were given to the world ten years in advance of any others of the series. It is a fair subject for question whether the word "idylls" is strictly applicable to pieces of the length and character of these noble works. The point is, however, quite immaterial; by whatever name the poems are called, they possess qualities of a very high and remarkable kind. The readers of these earlier idylls can scarcely be blamed for failing to discover the allegorical meaning which the complete series has been said to convey. It was the stately movement of the narrative, the fastidious music of the verse, the lofty tone of the sentiment, that fixed instant attention on the four poems, and took captive the intellects of the best judges of poetry.

The story of "Enid" is founded on Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the Welsh "Mabinogion," which the poet has followed somewhat closely, suppressing, however, unnecessary particulars, and altering the arrangement where a better artistic effect was to be obtained. The patient endurance of her husband's stern suspicions by this second Griselda, the arts of the wily Vivien, the devotion and death of "the lily maid of Astolat," and the great fault of the queen, considered merely as pieces of narrative painting, and without reference to any spiritual significance, must be put on a level with the best poetry of the kind since the time of Milton. It was realized at once, even by many who had hitherto been sceptical of the fact, that the Laureate was capable of sustained, as well as of lofty, flights. The gloss of ideal treatment which the legend of the Round Table has received at his hands enhances its beauty, regarding the matter from the standpoint of art. That the Arthur of the poems—the *flos regum*—and his knights, so pure in their aspirations, so noble in their chivalry, so great in the original purposes of their order, were impossible in an age of rude and uncultured manners, and still more barbarous morals, does not in the least mar our enjoyment

of the halo of romantic grace which Tennyson has thrown around their legendary exploits. The same exquisite felicity of language, the same intimate familiarity with Nature's works, the same richness and freedom of metaphor which had become notable in previous works, were now united with a grandeur of subject and a largeness of treatment at once surpassing and unexpected. There was the old sensuous beauty of description, but combined with it a nobleness of measure that made fit music for the grand legendary figures which loomed, at his beck, out of the mist of the mediæval past. And withal, the narratives not only flowed along with a free movement and an increasing interest, but the fine touches of moral suggestion that spoke to even the least reflective mind gave a breadth and a gravity to the poems, to be increased when, at a later period, the whole scope of their moral purpose was to be set forth.

The popular verdict was made emphatic by the sale of ten thousand copies in a few weeks. Strange to say, the most dissentient voice from this chorus of delight was that of Tennyson's old friend Carlyle. But Carlyle was not a great admirer of the smooth and mellifluous style, and it may be doubted if he grasped, until long after, the great principles which the "Idylls" were intended to symbolize; otherwise we should scarcely have found him writing in this comically querulous strain—"We read at first Tennyson's 'Idylls' with profound recognition of the finely elaborated execution, and also of the inward perfection of *vacancy*, and, to say truth, with considerable impatience at being treated so very like infants, though the lollipops were so superlative. We gladly changed for one of Emerson's 'English Traits.' " * Against this may be set the fine tribute by Dickens, and the appreciation of Prince Albert, who wrote the following letter to the Laureate:—

"MY DEAR MR. TENNYSON,

"Will you forgive me if I intrude upon your leisure with a request which I have thought some little time of

* Carlyle to Emerson (Correspondence).

making, viz., that you would be good enough to write your name in the accompanying volume of your 'Idylls of the King'? You would thus add a peculiar interest to the book containing those beautiful songs, from the perusal of which I derived the greatest enjoyment. They quite rekindle the feeling with which the legends of King Arthur must have inspired the chivalry of old, whilst the graceful form in which they are presented blends those feelings with the softer tone of our present age.

"Believe me always yours truly,

"ALBERT.

"BUCKINGHAM PALACE, 17th May, 1860."

Two years later a new edition of the "Idylls" was published, with a dedication to the memory of the good Prince who had loved them so well. No mere lip-service could have produced these matchless lines, which rank with the noblest and most perfect tributes ever paid by a subject to one living "in that fierce light which beats upon a throne." No Laureate, moved only by the requirements of his official position, could have painted in words at once so chaste, dignified, and sonorous the character of the deceased prince. The homage spoken in this dedication came from the heart; the concluding benediction, tender, solemn, beautiful, was the utterance of a loyal sympathy which has made the name of Court poet wear a new meaning in our time.

It may be convenient here to refer briefly to the rest of the Arthurian poems. "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Ettarre," and "The Passing of Arthur" (into which the "Morte d'Arthur" of 1842 was woven), appeared at the end of 1869;* "The Last Tournament" and "Gareth and Lynette," at a later date. It has been pointed out that the Coming and Passing of Arthur are written in a more archaic style than the other Idylls—a distinction that was intentional on the part of Lord

* As showing the enormous growth of the Laureate's popularity, it may be mentioned that 40,000 copies of this volume were ordered in advance.

Tennyson. The complete series constitute a great connected poem, dealing not only with the history and decadence of the Round Table, but containing an allegorical meaning illustrative of the origin, the struggles, and the passing of the soul of man. The late Dean Alford, for many years an intimate friend of the poet's, set forth this view in the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1870. The "Idylls" are to be read in the light of a passage in the epilogue, which describes the king, apart from his outward kingliness, as shadowing the Soul in its war with Sense. In this aspect, they deal with the very highest interests of man. "One noble design warms and unites the whole. In Arthur's coming—his foundation of the Round Table—his struggles, and disappointments, and departure—we see the conflict continually maintained between the spirit and the flesh; and in the pragmatism issue, we recognize the bearing down in history, and in individual man, of pure and lofty Christian purpose by the lusts of the flesh, by the corruptions of superstition, by human passions and selfishness."

But we have tarried too long, though not half as long as the beauty of the "Idylls" would justify, in the domain of literary narrative, and it is necessary now to gather up some threads of personal interest. In August, 1859, we find Tennyson making a tour in Portugal with Francis Turner Palgrave, who was at that time preparing his "Golden Treasury," in the selections for which he had the advantage of Tennyson's fine taste. There had been a previous agreement, it would seem, respecting the scope of the work. "During a walk near Land's End," says Mr. Palgrave, "which is still fresh in my memory, I had placed the scheme of the book before him: but, on learning that my plan included the best lyrics by writers then alive, and only the best, he at once barred any pieces by him from insertion within an anthology bearing a title which, in itself, seemed to claim the honours of excellence for the contents."

A couple of years later he revisited the ground in the Pyrenees which, in early manhood, he had trodden with Arthur Hallam. Through Clough we hear of him at

Mont-les-Bains, at Bigorre, in pleasant lodgings by maize fields at Luchon, and at Cauterets. Some eight or ten weeks were thus spent by the poet, and his wife and two children, in moving from place to place. Referring to this journey, he writes in one of his poems,—

“All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away ;
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.”

On September 7, Clough writes, “I have been out for a walk with Alfred Tennyson, to a sort of island between two waterfalls (at Cauterets), with pines on it, of which he retained a recollection from his visit of thirty-one years ago, and which, moreover, furnished a simile to ‘The Princess.’ He is very fond of this place evidently.”

At Farringford, during these years, the poet received many of his chosen friends. Charles Kingsley snatched a week from his onerous duties, to get refreshment from the sea-breezes of Freshwater. Sydney Dobell went to see Tennyson, and found “the glorious old god as god-like as ever,” and kind “in his great blind superhuman manner, like a colossal child”; and when some one told him that they were going to bring an authoress, “his horror at ‘writing women’ was grotesque to behold.”

Sir Henry Taylor in his “Autobiography” has several references to Tennyson about this time. He says that the Tennyson children pleased him very much: “I am sure you would find them very engaging creatures, gentle and social. . . . Alfred Tennyson came in the morning in an agreeable mood, though it *was* in the morning. His agreeable moods are generally in the evening. After I was in bed, Mrs. Cameron wrapped a shawl round her head and went down to the beach, and finding a most magnificent state of things there, she sent for Alfred, who joined her, and whom she left to make the most of it. He seems to be independent of weather. Mrs. Cameron says that, in one

of the great storms of this year, he walked all along the coast to the Needles, which is six miles off. With all his shattered nerves and uneasy gloom, he seems to have some sort of strength and hardihood. There is a great deal in him that is like ———. But his tenderness is more genuine, as well as his simplicity; and he has no hostilities, and is never active as against people. He only grumbles. . . . He wants a story to treat, being full of poetry, with nothing to put it in. . . . It was in this year (1860), I think, that Mrs. Cameron wrote an undated letter in which mention is made of Tennyson: ‘Alfred talked very pleasantly that evening to Anne Thackeray, and L—— S——. He spoke of Jane Austen, as James Spedding does, as next to Shakespeare! I can never imagine what they mean when they say such things. Alfred has grown, he says, much fonder of you since your last two visits here. He says he feels now he is beginning to know you, and not to feel afraid of you, and that he is beginning to get over your extreme insolence to him when he was young, and you were in your meridian splendour and glory. He was very violent with the girls on the subject of the rage for autographs. He said he believed every crime and every vice in the world were connected with the passion for autographs and anecdotes and records; that the desiring anecdotes and acquaintance with the lives of great men was treating them like pigs, to be ripped open for the public; that he knew he himself should be ripped open like a pig; that he thanked God Almighty with his whole heart and soul that he knew nothing, and that the world knew nothing, of Shakespeare but his writings; and that he thanked God Almighty that he knew nothing of Jane Austen, and that there were no letters preserved either of Shakespeare’s or of Jane Austen’s, that they had not been ripped open like pigs. Then he said that the post for two days had brought *him* no letters, and that he thought there was a sort of syncope in the world as to him and his fame. I told him of the mad worship of Swinburne, of ——— the Pre-Raphaelite saying that Swinburne was greater than Shelley or Tennyson or Wordsworth.’”

In 1862, Sir Henry again writes: "Alfred came down to see me yesterday, and was very cordial in inviting me up to his garret. He really does look a very grand man; and I think I should still be disposed to follow after him as before. He has all the charm of a little child as well as that of a great man, and that deep voice of his is very music to me." And on another day: "I went to Farringford and sat awhile with Mrs. Tennyson, and then he asked me to go up to his attics, and when I had said all I had to say about the beauty of his views (not quite enough to satisfy him though, for I liked one view—*his own*—much the best, and he growled out, 'How very odd you are! One view is just as fine as the other'), he took me all over his place, which is really very lovely, and he was very kind and cordial, though full of complaints of the wickedness of mankind in general, and the special wickedness of the islanders who look at him and pick his cowslips; cordial to the girls, too, though he heard me encourage them to fill their baskets from his woods."

In the same year, under date June 15, Sir Henry gives us another glimpse of the poet: "We dined with the Tennysons yesterday, and in the evening he read us his new poem—a story (said to be true) which Woolner had read in the diary of a lady who was his fellow-passenger in a voyage to Australia. It is a very powerful poem, of the genus 'Michael.' The fault of the subject, if not of the treatment, was illustrated by its effect upon one of the audience, Mrs. J——. After an hour and a half, and when the end was near, she went into hysterics. The poem is too purely painful, the pain not being the rich and pleasing pain which poetry ought to produce. It is not so coloured and glorified by imaginative power as to exalt the reader above his terrestrial distress. . . . Mrs. Tennyson must be much stronger than she was when you were here. She was looking less fragile than I recollect to have seen her look before, and very pretty and tender and interesting."

In 1864, Garibaldi paid a visit to Tennyson at Farringford. The meeting of these two remarkable men—the man of thought and the man of action, the hero of the pen and the

hero of the sword—was indeed memorable in its suggestive contrasts. At the request of Mrs. Tennyson, Garibaldi planted a *Wellingtonia gigantea* in the grounds; but before twenty-four hours had passed, some too ardent republican, with rude and vandal hands, had broken off one of the branches.

One of the guests invited to meet Garibaldi was Sir Henry Taylor, who chronicled the event in verse, of which a sample may be here quoted:—

“Something betwixt a pasture and a park,
 Saved from sea-breezes by a hump of down,
 Tossed by blue-bells in the face of April, dark
 With fitful frown.

“And there was he, that gentle hero, who,
 By virtue and strength of his right arm,
 Dethroned an unjust king, and then withdrew
 To tend his farm.

“To whom came forth a mighty man of song,
 Whose deep-mouth’d music rolls thro’ all the land,
 Voices of many rivers, rich or strong,
 Or sweet or grand.”

It is unnecessary to trace in detail the record of Lord Tennyson’s shorter publications during these years. Between 1859 and 1864 the world had been delighted with “The Grandmother,” “Tithonus” (on securing which for the *Cornhill Magazine* Thackeray was jubilant), the “Exhibition Ode,” and the “Welcome to Alexandra,” which Thackeray compared to the waving of a flaring pine-tree torch on a windy headland; besides a number of minor pieces. In 1864 appeared a new work upon which he had been engaged for some time. The first intention was to call it “Idylls of the Hearth,” but as that title might have led to some confusion it was abandoned, and “*Enoch Arden*” chosen instead. The same volume contained “*Aylmer’s Field*,” several reprinted poems, and “*The Northern Farmer, Old Style*.” Both “*Enoch Arden*” and “*Aylmer’s Field*” originated in narratives of real life told to the poet by a friend, and he was so struck by them that he requested to have the circumstances set forth at length in writing.

“*Enoch Arden*” requires no description, so well is the

story known. In its fulness of domestic pathos, it possesses an interest that compels the suffrages of all hearts. A sure test of its commandingly human quality is furnished by the fact that it was on one occasion read to an audience of the rudest, most illiterate people of the "slums" of a great provincial town. Although the reader had no marked gifts of elocution, the touching character of the narrative held these poor folks in sobbing sympathy to the very end, and they understood it all, as one might have read in the moisture of their rapt and hungering eyes. Lord Tennyson, on being made acquainted with this interesting circumstance, in thanking his informant said, "If my poems have indeed power for good over the people, it ought to be matter of great joy to me, and of still greater thankfulness."

The construction of "Enoch Arden" is skilful, the scenic accessories are painted with picturesque effect, the narrative is carried along without halting or drooping. It has been objected that the last three lines are an anti-climax, and that the mind is suddenly disenchanted by a reference to the costliness of Arden's funeral; though it was poetical justice to Annie—as some one said. This, however, is not a considerable blemish, and weighs but little in the scale against the vivid pictures of tropical splendours, and the moving incident, described with such refined sensibility, of the returned sailor peeping through the window at his wife and children and not daring to make himself known.

Mr. Edmund Yates, in his "Autobiography," relates the following: "The first time I met Tennyson was in Mr. Tupper's company, at the house of Mr. J. Bertram Payne, the then representative of Moxon & Co., where a few literary men were gathered together. It was the first time that the two poets had met, and it was amusing to watch their bearing to each other. The proofs of Mr. Hughes's recently finished drawings, for the illustrated edition of 'Enoch Arden' were submitted to the Laureate, who approved of them all with one exception. 'This is not right,' he said, in his deep voice. '*There came so loud a calling of the sea.* The man cannot have lived by the sea;

he does not know what a 'calling' means. It is anything but a great upheaval such as is here represented.'"

"The Northern Farmer," in the same volume, was a revelation of a new power in Tennyson. No one, at all events no one outside his own circle of friends, suspected its existence. The command of Lincolnshire dialect had perhaps the least part in this delightful surprise. The poem throbs with character; every pulse in every line is the heart-beat of a strongly marked individuality. People have said that Tennyson had no humour: their answer is, that "The Northern Farmer" bristles with humour. What could be better in this respect than the lines about the parson?—

"An' I hallus coom'd to's choorch afor moy Sally wur deäð,
An' 'eered 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock ower my 'eäd,
An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summit to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy."

Note, too, the petulance of the inquiry, "Do God amoighty knaw what a's doing a-taäkin' o' meä?" There are few things in the way of word-portraiture more lifelike than the picture which this self-willed, opinionated, old-world farmer draws of himself.

Dr. Whewell's criticism of the poem was amusing. "It seems to me," he observed, "that the poet has wasted a great deal of dialectic ingenuity in describing a very *wuthless pussonage*."

Under the date Oct. 22, 1864, Sir F. Pollock refers to a visit to Tennyson. "Evening at Farringford. Tennyson read 'Boadicea' and 'The Lincolnshire Farmer.' The latter gains immensely by his giving the words their proper accent, and by the enormous sense of humour thrown into it by his voice and manner in reading it. I asked Tennyson which he preferred of the two poems, 'Enoch Arden' or 'Aylmer's Field.' He replied 'Enoch Arden,' which he thought was very perfect, and a beautiful story. 'Aylmer's Field' had given him more trouble than anything he ever did. At one time he had to put it aside altogether for six months, the story was so intractable, and it was so difficult to deal with modern manners and conversation. The Indian

relative was introduced solely for the sake of the dagger, which was to be the instrument of the lover's suicide."

The year 1865 brought a sorrow to the poet in the death of his mother. This estimable lady died on February the 21st, aged 84 years. For many years she had resided at Well Walk, Hampstead, along with her sister, Miss Mary Anne Fytche. Her remains were interred in Highgate Cemetery.

Rumours of the Queen's desire to confer some distinction upon Tennyson were circulated early in 1865. The *Athenæum* announced that Her Majesty had offered a baronetcy to the Poet Laureate, and that "this offering from the heart not to be denied, not to be postponed," had been accepted "in the spirit in which it was offered to his acceptance." It is unnecessary to remark that the announcement, so far as it related to the acceptance of the baronetcy, was without foundation. The poet probably saw good reason for begging to be excused the proffered honour, and, not for the only time, the quidnuncs who precipitately dubbed him "Sir Alfred" by anticipation had to confess that they had reckoned without their host.

When Mr. Gladstone became Premier in 1868, he "entered fully" into the subject of a baronetcy with Mr. Tennyson, but the suggestion came to nothing. Communications on the subject were re-opened by Mr. Disraeli in December, 1874. Anxious to be the medium of conferring some honour upon Carlyle and Tennyson—whom he described as "if not a great poet, a real one"—he offered to the former the Grand Cross of the Bath, and to the latter a baronetcy.

Carlyle promptly declined a compliment which, in the case of such an eminent writer, was so inadequate as to be liable to be mistaken for an affront in disguise; but he was particularly anxious that his decision should not be made known to Tennyson, so that the latter might not be in any way influenced by the course he had taken. Tennyson had very little hesitation in coming to a similar determination with regard to the baronetcy. Honours of another kind he had not been unwilling to accept. In 1865, for instance, he was elected a member of the Royal Society; and

evidences of his having attained the Olympian heights, so far as contemporary opinion is concerned, were given in a score of less notable ways.

But in the year 1866 he was concerned in an episode which aroused an amazing amount of bad feeling in England, and by the side he took he alienated for a time the esteem and good-will of a well-meaning but intolerant section of his countrymen. It will be recollected that Edward John Eyre was a pupil at the Louth Grammar School soon after Tennyson had left. Circumstances now occurred to bring his name very prominently before the public. The promptitude and vigour with which he acted in quelling what might have been a successful revolution of the blacks in Jamaica subjected him to a prosecution got up by the religious partisans of the ringleader of the insurrection. A defence fund was set on foot by those who believed that Eyre's firmness had been the means of averting a terrible catastrophe. Carlyle, Ruskin, Charles Kingsley, and Tennyson were among the subscribers. The Laureate wrote to the honorary secretary in the following terms: "I send my small subscription as a tribute to the nobleness of the man, and as a protest against the spirit in which a servant of the State, who has saved to us one of the islands of the Empire, and many English lives, seems to be hunted down. In the mean time, the outbreak of our Indian mutiny remains as a warning to all but madmen against want of vigour and swift decisiveness." Mr. Tennyson never expressed approval of *all* that Eyre had done; and Carlyle's letter was much stronger. The latter spoke of Mr. Eyre as "a just, humane, and valiant man, faithful to his trusts everywhere, and with no ordinary faculty for executing them"; and described his services in Jamaica as "of great, perhaps incalculable value, as certainly they were of perilous and appalling difficulty." Whatever opinion may now be held respecting some of the drastic incidents which marked the suppression of the revolt, it must be admitted that these views of Governor Eyre's conduct were characterized by a generous and chivalrous desire to stand by a man who had acted to the best of his judgment

in a time of frightful peril, and who was being persecuted for the conscientious discharge of his duty.

Under date June 30, 1866, the late Archbishop Trench wrote: "Went with Bertram Payne, Esq., to Lymington, thence by ferry to Yarmouth, where we took a carriage for Farringford, the residence of Tennyson, and were warmly received by him. A lovelier spot would be difficult to find. All was charming; books everywhere, engravings, a few paintings, casts, and statuettes. Dined at seven. Mrs. Tennyson a most gentle lady, in evident feeble health, with remains of rare beauty; the poet's sister, an old maid; his boys, Hallam and Lionel—this was the family. After dinner, which was excellent but simple—soups, salmon, roast mutton, ducks, peas, tarts, puddings, strawberries, and cherries—the gentlemen adjourned to the top of the house, where, in the poet's sanctum, we had pipes and talked till two o'clock. July 1—I came down at nine and attended prayers. Mrs. Tennyson conducted the service. In the morning I sat with Tennyson in his den, where he read me an unpublished poem in continuation of 'The Northern Farmer.' Tennyson repeated 'My Heart's in the Highlands' with great unction, and said nobody wrote such music nowadays."

In 1867 it was announced that Tennyson had purchased the Greenhill estate, at Blackdown in Surrey, just on the borders of Sussex. The poet was driven away from the Isle of Wight during the summer months by the vulgar curiosity of mobs of tourists, who walked about his grounds, pointing their telescopes and field-glasses at him, even, indeed, flattening their inquisitive noses against his windows. "The pertinacity of the curious," says one writer, "invaded the solitude, so dear to a man of Tennyson's reflective temperament, until he could hardly venture to move from the door of his house. Americans first injured him by stealing his verses, and then added insult to injury by flaunting their nationality constantly in his face, until the sight of a stranger became hateful to him, and his sensitive dislike to prying inquisitiveness goaded him into treating all

whom he did not know as if they were, in act or intention, his persecutors." The Laureate's Surrey estate was situated above the little sleepy hollow of Haslemere, on the summit of a high hill; amidst surroundings of lovely scenery, and with views of miles of varied landscape in all directions. Here he built him a summer residence, from the designs of Mr. Knowles, the eminent architect, and editor of the *Nineteenth Century*.

About this time the Metaphysical Society was started, and Mr. Knowles has published a memorandum concerning its origin from which we may quote a few sentences:—

"In the autumn of 1868, Mr. Tennyson and the Rev. Charles Pritchard—Savilian Professor of Astronomy—were guests together in my house. A good deal of talk arose on speculative subjects, especially theology, and in the course of it the idea was suggested of founding a Theological Society, to discuss such questions after the manner and with the freedom of an ordinary scientific society. I volunteered to endeavour to bring such a body together if Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Pritchard would promise to belong to it, and I then consulted other friends, beginning with Dean Stanley, Dean Alford, Archbishop Manning, the Rev. James Martineau, the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, Dr. Ward of the *Dublin Review*, Mr. R. H. Hutton of the *Spectator*, and one or two more, finding them all willing to join. I next went to the opposition, and, explaining our plan, found Professor Huxley, Professor Tyndall, Mr. Froude, Mr. Walter Bagehot, Sir John Lubbock, and others equally ready to co-operate."

The first meeting was held at Willis's Rooms on the 21st of April, 1869, and although Mr. Froude said that if the society hung together for twelve months it would become "one of the most remarkable facts in history," it hung together nearly twelve years, meeting once a month, generally at an hotel, where, after dinner, a paper was usually read by one of the members, and afterwards discussed. At an early meeting, Tennyson remarked that modern science ought, at any rate, to have taught them how to separate light

from heat; and the remark always seemed to be borne in mind in their controversies.

An instance of the way in which "the Americans injured him by stealing his verses" occurred about this time, and the incident has a curious and interesting bearing on the question of international copyright. In 1867, a limited number of copies of the twelve little poems called "The Window" were printed for private circulation, at the press of Sir Ivor Guest, of Canfor Manor, Dorset, with this quaint dedication: "These little songs, whose almost sole merit—at least till they are wedded to music—is that they are so excellently printed, I dedicate to the printer." Some unscrupulous person having obtained a copy, took it to the United States with the object of finding a purchaser. The following correspondence, bearing on this audacious mission, shows what sort of a reception the proposal met with in one quarter; but the rebuff did not hinder the possessor of the copy from attempts which proved more successful elsewhere.

"GENTLEMEN, "NEW YORK, *December 3, 1869.*

"I have just arrived from England, where I received a commission to dispose of a series of twelve small poems, by Alfred Tennyson, P.L. of Great Britain. They have never been published, having been privately printed by Sir ———, at his private press, where only six copies were printed. The lowest price for these twelve poems, together with a MS. volume containing various emendations, is £250 sterling. These poems are known to about a dozen persons only. Corroborative evidence will be given in writing, if desired, as to the poems having been written by A. Tennyson, and also as to their being still unpublished.

"Please address, ——— Street, New York."

"DEAR SIR, "BOSTON, *December 6, 1869.*

"We are in receipt of your letter of December 3, in which you say you are in possession of certain unpublished poems of Mr. Tennyson's, which you are willing to dispose of for the sum of £250 sterling. We are perfectly

aware of the existence of these poems, but we are also aware that they should not be given to the public, they having been written for a strictly private reason. Within two months a member of our firm has personally conversed with Mr. Tennyson upon this very point, and we therefore know precisely what his feeling is.

“Under no circumstances could we enter into negotiations for their publication. More than this, we feel certain that only by a breach of confidence on the part of some person could they have found their way to the American market.

“As Mr. Tennyson’s authorized publishers and representatives in America, we must remonstrate, in the strongest terms, against any publicity being given to these poems; and we trust, upon this view of the case being presented to your mind, you will discontinue proceedings in the matter.

“We shall be glad to hear that you conclude to withdraw them from publication.

“Your obedient servants,

“FIELDS, OSGOOD & Co.”

Not only were Mr. Tennyson’s poems ruthlessly pirated in the United States, without his reaping any pecuniary advantage from their illegitimate sale, but copies published in the regular way by his American agents were surreptitiously brought over to England, and offered for sale, to the damage of the English copyright. In 1870 he and his publishers found it necessary to take action for the protection of their interests. A number of Glasgow booksellers were found to be doing a considerable trade in these imported copies. In March an application was made to Lord Gifford, in the Edinburgh Court of Session, for an interdict to restrain five of these booksellers from importing and selling any reprint or edition of Tennyson’s poetical works, printed in the United States, and published there by Ticknor & Fields, and by Fields, Osgood & Co., Boston. There being no defence, the interdict was made absolute. One of the booksellers—a Mr. R. Forrester—continued to sell the American edition; and, in June, Mr. Tennyson and Messrs. Strahan (his then publishers) raised an action to

recover damages, which resulted in a verdict against the defendant, with damages to the tune of £500—a sharp lesson for his temerity in defying the order of the Court.

It is pleasant to turn from incidents of this kind to Lord Tennyson's more agreeable connections with America. One such is afforded by the visit of the poet Longfellow to Farringford, during his sojourn in England (1868-69). It would be interesting to know what the two famous singers thought of each other, and how far they were able to travel on common ground of feeling and experience. Longfellow's remembrance of the visit, we know, was a delightful one. Writing to Mrs. Fields on July 19, 1868, he says: "We came last night from Freshwater, where we had passed two happy days with Tennyson—not at his house, but mostly with him. He was very cordial and very amiable; and gave up his whole time to us. At Farringford your memory is fresh and fragrant." He always spoke of Tennyson in the warmest terms of admiration—of his personal as well as of his intellectual qualities. This feeling found charming expression in the sonnet called "Wapentake":—

"Poet! I come to touch thy lance with mine;
Not as a knight, who on the listed field
Of tourney touched his adversary's shield
In token of defiance, but in sign
Of homage to the mastery, which is thine,
In English song; nor will I keep concealed
And voiceless, as a rivulet frost-congealed,
My admiration for thy verse divine.
Not of the howling dervishes of song,
Who craze the brain with their delirious dance,
Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!
Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
To thee our love and our allegiance,
For thy allegiance to the poet's art."

In 1869 another instance of American appreciation, always keen in the case of Tennyson, was afforded in the establishment of a society in Philadelphia, calling itself by his name. The secretary having written to him to suggest a motto, received the following reply:—

"DEAR SIR,

"September 9, 1869.

"You have done me honour in associating my

name with your institution, and you have my hearty good wishes for its success. Will the following Welsh motto be of any service to you; I have it in encaustic tiles on the pavement of my entrance-hall: 'Y Gwir yn erbyn y byd' (The truth against the world). A very old British apothegm, and I think a noble one, and which may serve your purpose either in Welsh or English. Your letter arrived when I was away from England, or would have been earlier answered.

"Believe me yours truly,

"A. TENNYSON."

Another distinction of a more flattering kind still, conferred in this year, was the Laureate's election as honorary fellow of his old college at Cambridge. *

By this time, Aldworth—the name of his Surrey house—was occupied. It was a white stone house, modern Gothic in style, with many wide mullioned windows, angled oriels in shadowy recesses, and dormers peeping out here and there, fronted by a long terrace with a low stone parapet covered with ivies and roses. The poet's quiet and unpretentious mode of life did not greatly impress those of his commoner neighbours who regard a stable full of horses and a retinue of servants as the outward symbols of eminence. A rather good story is told in Bishop Wilberforce's diary. At a luncheon at Blackdown, close to Haslemere, a Mr. — told the bishop the following conversation that passed between a stranger and a resident: "Mr. Tennyson lives here, does not he?" "Yes, he does." "He is a great man!" "Well, I don't well know what you

* Tennyson's regard for his Alma Mater was always strong. He did, it is true, in youth write a somewhat disparaging sonnet beginning, "Therefore your Halls, your ancient Colleges," in which he said—

'Your manner sorts

Not with this age wherefrom ye stand apart—

. you that do profess to teach,

And teach us nothing, feeding not the heart";

but to his own copy of this sonnet he appended the following note: "I have a great affection for my old university, and can only regret that this spirit of undergraduate irritability against the Cambridge of that day ever found its way into print."

call great, but he only keeps one man-servant, and *he* doesn't sleep in the house ! ”

Writing in July, 1867, Lord Houghton, after a visit to Tennyson's new Surrey home, says : “ The bard was very agreeable, and his wife and son delightful. He has built himself a very handsome and commodious home in a most inaccessible site, with every comfort he can require, and every discomfort to all who approach him. What can be more poetical ? The Gladstones and the Duke of Argyll were there last week.”

A trait of character is disclosed in the following note from Lord Houghton to his aunts, dated March 27, 1870 :

“ DEAR LADIES,—I have the honour of entertaining Tennyson at dinner to-morrow. He insists on dining at seven, and on having some old port. I have brought some from Fryston, which my father called ‘ The Alderman,’ which is, I suppose, from the year when the horse won the Leger, which I don't doubt you will remember.”

It has been often stated that Tennyson was a believer in spiritualism, but beyond the fact that, like all great thinkers, he recognized the existence of “ more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy,” there is no reason to suppose that he had formed any definite opinions on the subject. His brother Frederick was known to have held more pronounced views, and it is no doubt very likely that Tennyson himself, impressed by such authority, was willing to present an inquiring mind to the new creed, or whatever it may be called. In the Life of D. D. Home appears the following extract from a letter written by a medical man in 1870 :—“ Since I saw you I have been in the Isle of Wight. I went to lunch with Alfred Tennyson, and had two or three hours' talk with him. . . . He says that if he and you and I could have a sitting or two in daylight, or in a strong artificial light, and he convinced himself of the *facts*, he should have no hesitation in proclaiming his belief in any way. Meantime, he says that he is much more inclined to believe than to disbelieve. He had all those tales about you from

Browning, including one that you went on your knees, wept, and confessed your imposture in a certain thing. I told him Browning was mad about the matter, and he admitted that B.'s manner led him to credit his prejudices more than his statement." Mr. Home did not, however, gratify Tennyson's desire to investigate.

Four years later (May 7, 1874) the poet wrote as follows in reply to a gentleman who had written to him on the subject of supposed spiritual revelations when under the partial influence of anæsthetics:—

"I have never had any revelations through anæsthetics, but a kind of waking trance (this for lack of a better name) I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till, all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest, the surest of the sure, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but only the true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words?"

During the period covered by these fragmentary particulars, the most important of the poet's works not previously alluded to were "The Victim," *Good Words*, January, 1868; "On a Spiteful Letter," *Once a Week*, January, 1868; "Lucretius," *Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1868; "The Northern Farmer: New Style," and "The Golden Supper." "Lucretius" attracted a special degree of attention, the subject being as unusually bold as the treatment was chaste and lofty. The vague and misty legend that the Tiber-side poet committed suicide after having been maddened by the administration of a love-philtre by his wife, "who found her master cold," is vitalized into a narrative of consummate power and delicacy. The poem is rich in beauties of colour and sound; and dexterously

interwoven with the outburst of self-loathing which the working of the "wicked broth" produces in Lucretius are the philosophical theories familiar to students of the *De Rerum Naturá*. In "The Northern Farmer," Tennyson again showed his mastery of dialect and humour.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next three or four years yield but little in the way of biographical material, but we have been permitted to make use of the following sketch of the friendships of Tennyson at this period :

" May, 1884.

" MY DEAR ———

" Mindful of the old proverb, ' Show me a man's friends, and I will show you what he himself is,' you ask me to tell something about the friends Lord Tennyson has gathered around him at Freshwater, and as I watch him sitting on the mossy tennis-lawn, under the shade of the lofty linden-tree, exchanging thoughts on the deepest subjects that can engage the mind of man, with companions not unworthy of the friendship he has bestowed on them, I feel tempted to raise the veil and relate some particulars concerning the chosen few who are now called to sit by the Laureate's side ; but as selections amongst the living and present are always invidious, I will rather speak of those who were his intimate friends in days that are no more, and who are now, alas ! to be reckoned among the absent or the dead.

" To depict for you a slight sketch of what manner of people they were, I must ask you to transport yourself back ten summers, and to picture to your mind's eye the figure of Tennyson emerging from the little green postern leading to the Down Lane. Bearing to the left, he lingers awhile at the first gate, to admire the beautiful view which, with its sea of Mediterranean blue and its foreground of pines, he compares to the Riviera ; but not again does he slacken the rapid pace, habitual to him, till he has turned towards

Freshwater Bay, and reached a house embosomed in ivy and garlanded to the very roof with roses in full bloom. He looks up to the window from which smiling faces are nodding to him, but ere his foot can cross the threshold the genial hostess of Dimbola has come out into her garden to meet and greet her honoured guest; and by the way in which they plunge forthwith into earnest converse, you can see what a true communion of spirit exists between them on most subjects, though, to her great regret, she cannot get Mr. Tennyson's full sympathy for the pursuit she at present finds so engrossing, and he cannot see why, because she has devoted herself to photography, he should be called upon to victimize himself by becoming her sitter so often. In vain does the lady of the camera lay before the poet the muster-roll of his illustrious fellow-victims who have already sat to her,* and urge how successful his friends thought her last study of him, and that the state of the atmosphere is even more favourable to photography to-day than it was when that study was taken. Mrs. Julia Margaret Cameron will not win her cause this time, her persuasions being suddenly cut short by the entrance of two gentlemen and a lady. The elder of the former at once arrests your attention by his patriarchal mien, as he stands erect, leaning on his staff, his ample white beard and snowy locks flowing down over a blue caftan, suggestive of the Eastern land so long his home. For this is Mr. C. H. Cameron, the husband of our hostess and a member of the Indian Council, who was for many years resident in Calcutta, where he and his wife were most highly esteemed by Lord Hardinge (after whom they have called one of their sons, who is now in the Ceylon Civil Service). Mr. Cameron is a first-rate classic, and he and the Laureate engage in an animated discussion about the

* A muster-roll not then complete, but afterwards embracing, among many other names, those of Browning, Carlyle, Darwin, Herschel, Herr Joachim, Jowett, Lecky, Sir Henry Taylor, Aubrey de Vere, Watts, the Emperor Frederick of Germany, &c. When the last named was sitting to her, she was so taken up with the desire of getting a satisfactory likeness, that, to make him open his eyes wider, she shouted out to him, "Big eyes! big eyes!" quite oblivious, at the moment, of his rank.

respective merits of certain great Greek and Latin writers, and the peculiarities of their several styles, whilst Mrs. Cameron turns to inquire of the younger gentleman how it fares with the poor of Freshwater. None can better answer her question, for he to whom it is addressed is Horatio Tennyson, seventh brother of the poet, now resident at the Terrace, close to Mrs. Cameron, who is devoting his life to ministering amongst those 'who are any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate,' winning the wanderers back into the fold by showing them he still counts them his brethren in Christ.

"He is the despair of his cook, for not only does he quite forget the appointed meal-times, as he lingers hour after hour by the bedsides of the sick and dying, but, should he discover that anything especially dainty is being prepared for his own dinner, he is sure to carry it off to some poor neighbour. On one occasion, a rather ancient and fish-like smell being noticed as he approached, he exclaimed, 'Oh, dear me! I was taking a dish of fish to Widow B —— yesterday, and was prevented going to her, and here is the fish still in my coat-pocket.'

"A subject of common interest to Mrs. Cameron and Mr. Horatio Tennyson is the reading-room she has lately established for the benefit of the working-men of Freshwater, and to which valuable gifts of books have been contributed, both by Mr. Tennyson and by the lady who has just entered the room, who is none other than Miss Thackeray, whose writings are so much appreciated by the world at large, and whose nobleness of heart renders her so dear to this more intimate circle of her Isle of Wight friends. As the conversation becomes more general, the bright flashes of Mrs. Cameron's wit make you feel how well-bestowed was the appellation by which she was known in India, when she formed one of that famous trio of Miss Pattles named 'Wit, Grace, and Beauty.' In the Laureate's brother she has her match, for, like Charles Turner, he is a born humourist, and has a most original, witty way of putting things before you.

“Presently Mrs. Cameron’s thoughts revert to her art, and she proposes a visit to her studio, where her maid, Mary, is preparing to sit to her in a group of the Holy Family after one of the old masters. Modestly veiled, and with a mantle of blue thrown about her, all are struck by the resemblance the maiden presents to one of Raphael’s Madonnas; though they agree that Mary Regan, another of Mrs. Cameron’s Maries, was more strictly beautiful. This Mary Regan was the girl whom Mrs. Cameron found sweeping a crossing at Putney, and whom she took into her own house, teaching her reading and writing as well as house-work, and making use of her as a subject in many a charming photograph—notably in that of ‘King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid,’ which, when hung in Messrs. Colnaghi’s window,* so much attracted the attention of a young gentleman of wealth and position, that he resolved to imitate King Cophetua and make the Beggar Maid his wife, and he has lately carried his resolution into effect, Mr. Tennyson having lent his carriage to convey the lovely bride to church.

“After watching Mrs. Cameron put the finishing touches to the arrangement of her sitters, her three guests turn to depart, having extracted from her a promise that she will meet them again at Farringford that very evening.

“I have spoken in the present tense of that lovely June day, more than ten years ago, which seems to come back to me as I write, together with many more days and years of the like happy intercourse between the families at Farringford and Dimbola. In 1878 her mother’s heart yearned to see her children once more, and in October of that year she set sail for Ceylon, promising to return to the Isle of Wight speedily, and never again to forsake her dear Freshwater friends. But in the early part of the following year, Lord Tennyson received a letter from Hardinge and Henry Cameron, telling how, ‘as the day died on Sunday, January 26, the sweet, tender, gracious spirit of our beloved

* At that time the London agents for the sale of Mrs. Cameron’s photographs.

mother passed away in peace. No death could have been more calm, more beautiful than this. "Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers." Her soul was ripe for heaven, if ever soul was. The beautiful, tender thoughts of your "In Memoriam" are a solace to us, as they have been to many aching, heavy hearts. We buried her in the quiet little churchyard at the head of the valley in Bogaliawantalawa, just such a spot as she would have chosen for her rest. So we left her, and returned to the dear father to cheer and comfort him.' In May, 1880, deep black-edged letters from Ceylon were once more put into Lord Tennyson's hands, telling how, 'on the 8th of this month, my dearest father left us, and, I hope, rejoined my dear mother in the spirit-world. When Death impresses his sign-manual on any countenance he gives it a great dignity. But his face, so noble and intellectual in life, looked perfectly sublime. We had his body carried fifty miles through the grand mountain and forest scenery which he in life so loved. A grand tropical thunder-storm burst over us as we passed down the mountain side to Dimbulla,* and it was grander than any military salute of guns, and seemed as though the heavens joined in paying honour to the dead. A coffin, draped in white, placed in a car drawn by two white bulls, took the body as far towards Bogaliawantalawa as the road went, and then twenty-six coolies carried the coffin in silence to St. Regulus, where he and mother had spent many happy days. The next day we travelled slowly through grand passes and forest, and at five o'clock in the evening we placed him by the side of our darling mother, his wife, friend, and companion of forty years. You who knew the entire happiness of our dear home at Freshwater, well know with what bursting hearts we left the loved ones in their grave.'

"The outer world knew Julia Margaret Cameron best as an epoch-maker in the history of photography; but much as the inner circle of her friends admired the wonderful studies she made of learned men and fair women, with their Rembrandt-like effects of light and shade, Mrs. Cameron was even

* From which Mrs. Cameron's Freshwater cottage was named.

more esteemed by them for herself than for her art, since in her they found one who, whilst loving her own family with a passionate affection, and expecting those who loved her to love them all too for her sake, yet, so far from suffering her affections to degenerate into that *égoïsme à deux ou à trois*, which is scarcely less utter selfishness because it takes in a family instead of the *ego* alone, she so far entered with her very soul into every concern of those who had the privilege of her friendship, that she seemed almost to lose her own personality in theirs, and, in the midst of her own deepest griefs and highest joys, she was ever ready to rejoice with them in their happiness or to weep over their sorrows, to aid them with her wise counsel, and to sacrifice her time, her money, and even her health to serve them. In a word, Mrs. Cameron was a woman worthy of the post she occupied of one of the chiefest among the friends of Lord and Lady Tennyson.

“After the bodily presence of Mrs. Cameron was taken from us, her spirit seemed to linger on in the person of a sister, who had come to Freshwater in order to be near her.* This was Mrs. Prinsep, the wife of Mr. Thoby Prinsep, the well-known East India Director. To their house, ‘The Briery,’† the Laureate (together with his eldest son, who, after leaving college, became his father’s inseparable companion) was an almost daily visitor, and many were the hours spent by him in congenial conversation, on politics, literature, or science, with the master mind that had long had so potent a share in the government of India, and whose ready grasp of almost every imaginable subject was only less wonderful than his marvellous memory. His keen interest in contemporary politics was unimpaired by the fact that his loss of eyesight compelled him to depend on others for his knowledge of passing events. Lord Tennyson took delight in reading aloud to him the interesting letters which every mail brought him from his artist-son, Mr. Val Prinsep, whilst the latter was

* She was the “Grace” of the trio before mentioned.

† So called from its sweet-brier hedge. It was afterwards let to Lord Kenmare.

engaged on his large painting of the 'Proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India' (which letters have since been published, almost without alteration, under the title of 'Imperial India').

"With the Prinseps lived, for part of the year, the artist from whom their son Val had first learnt to handle the brush—Mr. Watts, the Royal Academician; and many a pleasant talk about art have the poet and the painter had together in the large studio at the Briery, on whose walls the colossal study of the 'Drayman and his Horses' used to hang. Many more of his pictures adorned the living-rooms, which were artistically furnished with costly objects from the East—so arranged that comfort was never sacrificed to appearance, but everything was made to minister to that hospitality of which the host and hostess were the very soul. Amongst those who were the most frequently to be met here were Mrs. Hughes and her children and grandchildren. Mrs. Nassau Senior, so well known for her philanthropic labours, long shared her mother's Freshwater home; but after her death, this noble-hearted mother undertook the long voyage to Tennessee, in order to take her granddaughter out to her father, who was in charge of the colony of Rugby, founded by his brother, Mr. Tom Hughes. Greatly to the regret of Lord Tennyson and of all her Freshwater friends, she has never returned to the Isle of Wight, but continues to reside in the colony, respected and beloved by all as their common mother.

"'Uncle Thoby,' as Mr. Prinsep was universally called, was never so happy as when he could gather the younger generation, and loved to mingle with their rippling laughter his own hearty laugh, the laugh that showed how he had preserved the unsullied innocence of childhood to the close of a long and eventful life. Hushed for ever is that cheery voice, now silent till awakened by the voice of God from the sleep 'Uncle Thoby' has been sleeping for six years in the beautiful resting-place by the banks of the Yar.

"Green, too, grows the grass over the grave of another

valued Freshwater friend of Lord Tennyson's, whose mortal remains lie in his own churchyard, close to Weston Manor, the house built by him, and in which the last years of his life were passed. I speak of Mr. Ward, famous as one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, and well-known in later times not only as a shining light in the Roman Catholic Church, of which he became a member, but to the world of letters in general as amongst the deepest thinkers of the day. Not alone at the Metaphysical Club to which they both belonged, but in the familiar intercourse they interchanged in their respective homes at Freshwater, did the author of 'In Memoriam' and of 'The Ideal of the Christian Church' commune together of the mysteries of faith and philosophy, each keeping firmly to his own standpoint, whilst giving earnest heed, with that freedom from prejudice a truly liberal mind alone can give, to the arguments of the other. They had not a few things in common in their mental calibre, and a close resemblance in that childlike simplicity which is ever an attribute of the truly great; but there was one point on which they differed *toto cælo*.

"Whilst the Laureate cherishes trees and flowers as if they were really endowed with the acute sensations attributed by Dante to his 'living wood,' and loves to listen in the early morning to the song of the birds in the trees overshadowing Farringford, Mr. Ward preferred the open expanse of Weston Manor to his well-wooded seat near Cowes, and was reported to have offered a reward of a guinea for every nightingale's head brought to him there, being well-nigh distracted by the loudness of their song.

"Amongst the pleasant society gathered round the festive board at Weston Manor, Alfred Tennyson was never to be found, for he had an intense dislike to dining out, his habit being to retire soon after dinner to his study, and there to spend the evening in solitude with his books, unless he was tempted by the bright starlight to climb up to the flat roof of his house, to carry on his favourite pursuit

of astronomy. I well remember one particular night on which there was a total eclipse of the moon, when he was so much struck by the number of constellations rendered visible to the naked eye through the veiling of the moon's light, that he insisted on his youngest son being got out of bed to look at the sight. The boy was Lionel of the golden hair, then a merry child like his own "golden-haired Ally" and Charlie, those angel-children who remind one, as they dance around their baby brother or prattle to their grandfather about the birds and flowers, of the beautiful Italian expression that calls such children 'Incarnations of the Smile of God.'

"Believe me yours very truly,

"A. G. WELD."

In 1871 "The Last Tournament" was published in the *Contemporary Review*, and in the following year "Gareth and Lynette" appeared, completing the Arthurian series. Incidents such as the presentation of a memorial to the Prime Minister, urging the claims of Mr. R. H. Horne to a pension, and the writing of a semi-official welcome to the Duchess of Edinburgh (1874), must be lightly passed over. With regard to the latter, however, it may be remarked that the Laureate, in his anxiety to give adequate expression to the national sentiment, went near to predicting rather more from the alliance, in its political consequences, than the circumstance justified. No doubt the question propounded in the following verse was, at the moment, an exact expression of the hope that was hovering on millions of lips, and finding utterance in every newspaper, Liberal and Tory, throughout the country:—

"Shall fears and jealous hatreds flame again?

Or at thy coming, Princess, everywhere,

The blue heavens break, and some diviner air

Breathe through the world, and change the hearts of men,

Alexandrowna?"

Sentiment, however, especially the sentiment which belongs to a royal marriage, has very little influence on international

jealousies and the intrigues of continental diplomatists. Not very long after the wedding, there occurred a strain in the relations of Russia and England which came very near to an outbreak of war. The wits, of course, made merry over this official poem, which, it must be admitted, was not one of the best of the Laureate's efforts.

On the occasion of the death of Lady Houghton, Tennyson wrote the following tender letter of sympathy to his old friend:—

“FARRINGFORD, ISLE OF WIGHT,

“ *March 6, 1874.*

“ MY DEAR HOUGHTON,

“ I was the other day present at a funeral here, and one of the chief mourners reached me her hand silently almost over the grave, and I as silently gave her mine. No words were possible; and this little note, that can do really nothing to help you in your sorrow, is just such a reaching of the hand to you, my old college comrade of more than forty years' standing, to show you that I think of you. You have your children; she must live to you, more or less, in them, and to you and others in the memory and result of her good and charitable life; and I may say that I think I can see as far as one can see in this twilight that the nobler nature does not pass from its individuality when it passes out of this one life. If you could believe as much, it would be a comfort to you, and perhaps you do. I did not intend to say even so much as this, and will say no more, only that I am

“ Yours affectionately,

“ A. TENNYSON.”

On the anniversary of the Balaclava Charge, in October, 1875, a banquet was given in London to commemorate that gallant exploit, and Lord Tennyson, who by his verse had done so much to give immortality to the episode, was pressed to attend. Being unable to do so, he sent the following letter to the chairman of the committee:

“FARRINGFORD, FRESHWATER,
“October 20, 1875.

“DEAR SIR,

“I cannot attend your banquet, but I enclose five pounds to defray some of its expenses, or to be distributed as you may think fit among the most indigent of the survivors of that glorious charge. A blunder it may have been, but one for which England should be grateful, having thereby learnt that her soldiers are the most honest and most obedient under the sun. I will drink a cup of wine on the 25th to the health and long life of all your fine fellows; and thanking yourself and your comrades heartily for the cordial invitation sent me, I pray you all to believe me, now and ever,

“Your admiring fellow-countryman,

“A TENNYSON.”

The narrative, thus far, has moved on so quickly, and with so many necessary leaps over years, that the fact that Tennyson was now between sixty and seventy years of age requires, perhaps, the impress of actual statement. A personal sketch at this period cannot but be worth giving, for the purpose of comparison with some of those earlier portraits already quoted. This is furnished for us by a writer in the *World* newspaper, who paid a visit to Aldworth in 1875.

“Within,” he says, “everything is ordered with a quiet, refined elegance that has in it, perhaps, just a *souçon* of an affectation of æstheticism not quite in keeping with the spirit either of modern or of mediæval life. The hall, in spite of its richly tessellated pavement, has a delightful sense of coolness in its soft half-light. The lofty rooms have broad high windows, the light from which is tempered by delicately coloured hangings; walls of the negative tints in which modern decorators delight, diapered with dull gold; and panelled ceilings of darkly stained wood with moulded ribs and beams. High-backed chairs, of ancient and uncompromising stiffness, flank the table, typifying the

poet's sterner moods ; while in cosy corners are comfortable lounges that indicate a tendency to yield sometimes to the soft seductions of more effeminate inspirations. Nowhere is the spirit vexed by garish ornament or the eye by glaring colour. A few good etchings and paintings hang on the walls ; among them an excellent copy of Peter Martyr, which is doubly valuable since the destruction of the original. But there is one room in which all that is most interesting in this house centres. The door opens noiselessly, and the tread of your feet is muffled as you enter a dim corridor, divided from the room by a high screen. The air is heavy with the odour of an incense not unfamiliar to men of letters ; and if you could doubt whence it arose, your doubts would be speedily dissolved as the occupant of the chamber comes forward to meet you, the inseparable pipe still between his teeth. The figure, though slightly bent, bears the burden of its sixty-six years lightly ; the dark mass of hair falling backward from the broad high forehead, and the ' knightly growth fringing his lips,' are but sparsely streaked with silver ; and the face, though rugged and deeply lined with thought, is full of calm dignity and of a tenderness strangely at variance with his somewhat brusque tone and manner. . . . Though the poet, like most thinkers, is slow of speech, and given to lapse into reverie, his powers of conversation are considerable. He speaks with a full rolling accent that to the over-refined ears of Cockneys would probably sound like provincialism, but no person could be more correctly emphatic in pronunciation ; and his ear is readily offended if a word be shorn of its due power as a great musician's by discordant sounds, or a painter's eye by false colouring ; and he does not allow the forms of society to stand in the way of giving very free expression to his annoyance. . . . His chief delight is to sit here in this quiet secluded study, surrounded by a few choice books of favourite authors ; and when not working at the desk by the window that overlooks the pine-glen and the purple down westward, to lounge by the larger one that looks down on the bright

blossoming terrace over the dense belt of beeches and hazels, where the whirring of nightjars sounds ceaselessly in the twilight, away to the gray lines of undulating hills and the streak of silver sea. Whatever he is doing, the eternal pipe is ever ready at hand, and a huge tobacco-jar, big enough for an ancestral urn, on the floor beside him. At other times he will wander down to the zigzag pathways that meander in all directions through the tall hazel-twigs which hem his house around, where one comes suddenly on a little secluded glade bright with mossy verdure, or a garden laden with odours from a score of pine-trees, or a bigger lawn devoted to the innocent pursuit of croquet or lawn-tennis. Less frequently, he may be seen walking through neighbouring by-ways, and exciting the curiosity of the village folk by the strangeness of his mien and the eccentricity of his costume. In all his out-of-door excursions he is sure to be accompanied by one or other of his handsome sons, 'full-limbed and tall.' She, the 'dear, near, and true,' whose sweet faith in him was ever the incentive to greater labour and higher aspirations, is no longer able to be by his side in work, but, invalid as she is, she still finds opportunity for ministering to the wants of the poor about her gates."

In 1875 "*Queen Mary*," a drama, was published, the publishers being Messrs. H. S. King & Co., to whom the poet had the year before transferred his business arrangements from Messrs. Strahan & Co. In a condensed and altered form, this work was produced at the Lyceum Theatre in 1876, with Miss Kate Bateman in the rôle of Mary, and Mr. Irving in the comparatively minor one of Philip II. of Spain. In writing for the stage, Lord Tennyson was acting in accordance with the traditions of his office. Cibber, Tate, Shadwell, Dryden, Davenant, and Ben Jonson—former wearers of the laurel—were all connected with the stage as authors, actors, or managers. But the experiment was undoubtedly a bold one for a poet close upon his sixty-seventh year. Competent critics saw clearly **that**, however powerful "*Queen Mary*" might be from a

literary point of view—and that it was powerful no one denied—yet as a whole it could never be made into what is called a good acting play; though Mr. Irving has expressed his opinion that, if curtailed, it would make a “magnificent domestic drama” for the stage. Much of the dialogue in it was very fine, several of the characters were drawn with singular fidelity and vigour, the presence of an indefinable dramatic interest was felt in the reading, yet the monotone of sombreness in which the play was enveloped, and the unrelieved gloom with which Mary Tudor’s own character was depicted, excluded it from the prospect of a permanent place upon the stage. It is not necessary to discuss the question how far historical accuracy may be sacrificed for the sake of dramatic effect, because whatever there is of such sacrifice in this play has a tendency to injure the dramatic effect. In a strictly historical character of Mary she would scarcely have been presented in such uniform and monochromatic unfavourableness; nor would a complete portraiture of Elizabeth, even in her uncrowned days, have left her harshness and incipient violence entirely unnoticed. The tendency of a contrast which throws Mary into the cold shadow of undeviating and repellent distress is to impair the play from an acting point of view. Not even her intense devotion to Philip redeems the character from the depressing tone which it takes from her passion, her remorse, the faults of her cruel race, and the sorrows of her miserable life. The many beautiful passages of this dramatic poem were to some extent weakened by the circumstance that the heroine’s strain of mental distress was not broken by a gleam of hope, except for one brief period of delusion, or relieved by the opportunity of resistance. To say that “Queen Mary” was a failure as a play, would be to take no account of the curiosity which a drama by the first of then living English poets, in which the first of living English actors acted, was bound to evoke. That curiosity lasted at least long enough to justify the experiment.

“I have a letter from Tennyson,” wrote Longfellow on

Sept. 29, 1876, "enclosing a paragraph from the *Times*, which says that he and his publishers had refused their permission to insert any of his poems in my collection. The letter is as follows: 'Here, in a little country town in Suffolk, I came upon this in the *Times*. I have had no word from yourself or Messrs. King & Co. about your forthcoming publication. They have my copyright in England for two years longer; but in America I give you full leave, and shall be honoured by your insertion of anything of mine in your collection.' "

In 1877 the Laureate published another poetical drama, "Harold." This has never been put on the stage, nor is it probable that the main intention of the author was to have it so produced. Although more dramatic in subject and more technical in treatment than "Queen Mary," it lacks the variety and the movement which are essential to a perfect stage piece. Mr. J. A. Symonds, one of our finest critics, thinks that the character-drawing is, from want of opportunity, less delicate and subtle than that in "Queen Mary," and that the dramatic genius of the poet is best shown in tracing the temper of Harold's character, and the slow action of policy, passion, and circumstance upon it. Comparing his dramas with the "Idylls," it must be conceded that, for the purpose of direct appeal to the popular imagination, the dramatic form did not prove altogether congenial to Tennyson's muse. It is not a little strange that an author who showed himself pre-eminently a master of narrative expression should at once have fallen to a weaker command of "touch" when he availed himself of the aids of dramatic machinery. It has been urged against "The Princess" and "Maud" that they are deprived of their full force by reason of the monodramatic mould in which they are cast; yet we venture to say that both "The Princess" and "Maud" will outlive "Queen Mary" and "Harold" in popular favour, in spite of the dictum of several men and women of letters, and particularly of George Eliot and G. H. Lewes, that "Tennyson's plays run Shakespeare's close."

Longfellow wrote to Tennyson of the pleasure he had

received from reading his drama "Harold." In reply Tennyson wrote :—

"Thanks for your generous letter. I have had many congratulatory ones about 'Harold,' but scarce any that I shall prize like yours. [You ask] 'What old ancestor spoke through you?' I fear none of mine fought for England on the hill of Senlac, for, as far as I know, I am part Dane, part Norman. When are you—or are you ever—coming to England? We are both getting old—I am, I believe, the older of the two; but I hope that we shall come together again before we pass away for ever."

In the next year it was announced that Lord Tennyson had written another drama, on the subject of Thomas à Becket. The report was so far correct that the manuscript of a play, variously described as "Thomas à Becket" and "Eleanor and Rosamond," was placed in the hands of one or two friends for perusal. This work was not, however, published till 1885—seven years later. When in its manuscript state, it was submitted to the critical judgment of the late G. H. Lewes. He said of it, "A kaleidoscope of lovely, wise, and humorous fragments is constantly shifting before my mind's eye, and I try to piece them into a whole, and to re-read the noble work. For it is only a vain critic who doesn't know by trial what a work of art is who can decide on a first inspection of what has cost the artist years of thought and rejection. The critic, too, often thrusts forward the suggestion which the artist early saw and rejected. The play is instinct with dramatic life, and (unlike Shakespeare) nowhere is there any fine writing thrust in because it is fine, and because the poet wanted to say the fine things which arose in his mind. Prophecy has been called 'the most gratuitous form of error' by my better half, so I ought to be chary in prophecy; yet I have no hesitation in saying that whatever the critics of to-day may think or say, the critics of to-morrow will unanimously declare Alfred Tennyson to be a great dramatic genius."

The late Mr. J. R. Green, the historian of the English

People, asserted that, with all his researches into the annals of the twelfth century, he had never arrived at so vivid a conception of the characters of Henry II. and his Court as was embodied in this drama.

Tennyson's published works in 1877 included several poems in the magazines, among which were four sonnets—a form of verse for which he did not show any great partiality, but which he handled in these cases with a perfect command of the delicacy and compactness of poetic diction which the sonnet requires. In 1878 his fine ballad of "The Revenge" appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*. When the poet read it to Carlyle, the latter exclaimed, "Eh! he has got the grip of it!" In the latter part of the same year Tennyson made a tour in Ireland, stopping a couple of days at Limerick, inspecting the historic memorials of the old city and its siege, and visiting Killarney. An anecdote told of him at Killarney is amusing. He said to the boatman, "When I last was here I heard eight echoes, and now I only hear one." To which the man, who had heard people quoting the bugle song, replied, "Why, you must be the gentleman that brought all the money to the place."

Lord Tennyson was a hearty admirer of good acting, and understood its principles and its laws. Although not a frequent visitor to the theatres, he was familiar with the methods of the greatest English exponents of tragedy who flourished during his own time. Reference has already been made to his intimacy with, and admiration for, Macready; and it may not be out of place to mention here that what Mr. Henry Irving has done for the stage was held in high esteem by the Poet Laureate. In April, 1879, he visited the Lyceum Theatre to see Mr. Irving in his impersonation of Hamlet, and it was noted by those in the house that he applauded the performance. "After the curtain fell," relates Mrs. Ritchie, "the whole play seemed to flow from off the stage into the box where he had been sitting, and I could scarcely tell at last where reality began and Shakespeare ended. The play was over, and we ourselves seemed a part of it still; here were the players, and

our own prince poet, in that familiar simple voice we all know, explaining the art, going straight to the point in his own downright fashion, criticizing with delicate appreciation, by the simple force of truth and conviction carrying all before him. 'You are a good actor lost,' one of these real actors said to him."

We are still compelled to glean stray items of interest, and bind them into such poor sheaves as we may. In September, Tennyson was compelled to take legal proceedings to prevent the republication *in extenso* of one of his suppressed poems—the "Supposed Confessions" already referred to in an earlier chapter. The *Christian Signal*, a weekly penny paper, had announced that its issue for September 6 would contain "an early unpublished poem of over 200 lines, by Alfred Tennyson (P.L.), entitled 'Confessions of a Sensitive Mind.'" An injunction was granted restraining the defendants from carrying out their intention, but the editor of the *Signal*, it should be mentioned, destroyed the proofs and broke up the types on hearing that the publication was objected to.*

In the same year the Rev. Charles Tennyson Turner, the Laureate's brother, died at Malvern, after a long illness. He was a true poet, sensitive in feeling, delicate in expression, melodious in utterance. The sonnets of his mature skill, which were a source of delight to his brother (who applied the epithet "exquisite" to more than one of them), have admirers among all lovers of a cultured and graceful fancy. "The Holy Emerald," "The Buoy Bell," "The Lattice at Sunset," "On Startling some Pigeons," "Time and Twilight," "It was her First Sweet Child," "A Summer Twilight," "The Quiet Tide near Ardrossan," "The Gossamer Light," "The Forest Glade," "In and Out of the Pine Wood," and that dainty *morceau*, "Letty's Globe," are some of the choicest. Charles Tennyson had taken the name of Turner along with some property which he inherited. One who saw him in his later life says that he was not, in looks, unlike his younger brother; stately,

* This poem has since been published in Macmillan's complete edition.

though shorter in stature ; gentle, spiritual, very noble, simple ; like something out of another world, more holy, more silent than this. By the death of his brother, Lord Tennyson became his heir.

Later in the same year, the management of the St. James's Theatre produced a semi-poetic play by Lord Tennyson, called "The Falcon," the incidents in which were derived from a well-known story of Boccaccio's. "Barry Cornwall" and Longfellow had previously rendered in verse the sentimental tale of the loves of Count Federigo de gli Alberighi and Monna Giovanna, and the untimely fate of the knight's good falcon. The hero, a poor nobleman who has spent his means in gay company and brave living, sacrifices his favourite falcon in order to entertain a wealthy and beautiful widow, who had previously treated his professions of regard with scorn ; and his generosity, and the genuine sorrow he experiences when he finds that he has killed the very thing which the lady has come to beg for her sick son, touch her heart, and she subsequently marries him. In a one-act piece, with so slight a thread of interest, much in the way of dramatic effect could not be expected (although it may be noted that Hazlitt recommended the subject for a play), but Mrs. Kendal as the Lady Giovanna obtained a genuine success, and the charm of the dialogue, as in all Tennyson's pieces, furnished an intellectual delight rare in the days of "brainless pantomime."

In the spring of 1880 an attempt was made to obtain the Laureate's consent to be put in nomination for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University. Under the impression that this was the general wish of the students, irrespective of their political leanings, he intimated to the deputation which waited upon him that he was willing to accede to the request. This consent, however, was conditional on the non-political nature of the nomination. When, therefore, a little later on, he found that he was being put forward as the nominee of the Conservative party, he promptly withdrew from the field, giving expression to his views in the following letter :—

“ May 6, 1880.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I only consented to stand for your Lord Rectorship when informed by the letter of introduction, which your agreeable deputation brought, that my nomination was ‘ supported by a large majority, if not the totality, of the students of Glasgow.’ It now seems necessary that I should, by standing at your invitation, appear what I have steadfastly refused to be—a party candidate for the Conservative Club. The mere fact of a contest between the supporters of a nominee of a Liberal and that of a Conservative Club leads, I suppose, inevitably to this conclusion in the minds of the public, and therefore I must beg to decline the honour of your candidature. You are probably aware that some years ago the Glasgow Liberals asked me to be their candidate, and that I, in like manner, declined; yet I would gladly accept a nomination, after what has occurred on this occasion, if at any time a body of students, bearing no political party name, should wish to nominate me, or if both Liberals and Conservatives should ever happen to agree in foregoing the excitement of a political contest, and in desiring a Lord Rector who would not appear for installation, and who would, in fact, be a mere *roi fainéant*, with nothing but the literary merits you are good enough to appreciate. I thank you for all the trouble you have taken, and I am, with best wishes for the prosperity of your University,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ A. TENNYSON.

“ Mr. MATTHEW P. FRASER.”

In the same year the volume “ Ballads and other Poems ” was published by Kegan Paul & Co.—the successors to H. S. King & Co.’s business. This volume was dedicated to “ Alfred Tennyson,” the poet’s little grandchild (son of Mr. Lionel Tennyson), then a year and a half old—“ Golden-haired Ally, whose name is one with mine.” Among the new poems were “ The First Quarrel,”

“Rizpah,” a powerful dialect piece called “The Northern Cobbler”—a poem which puts the heroic side of total abstinence better than anything in the whole literature of teetotalism;* “The Sisters,” a pathetic story in blank verse; “The Village Wife, or the Entail,” another powerful dialect piece, with many gleams of quaint humour; “In the Children’s Hospital,” “Sir John Oldcastle,” “Columbus,” and “The Voyage of Maeldune.”

The beautiful spirit that pervades “In the Children’s Hospital,” though marred a little by a needlessly harsh attack on the practice of modern surgery, as exhibited by one of the hospital staff, is charged with such a simple earnest faith, and the story itself is so sweetly sad, that one seems to be moving once more in the familiar atmosphere of the earlier poems. What could be more exquisite in its simplicity than this passage?—

“‘Yes, and I will,’ said Emmie, ‘but then, if I call to the Lord, How should He know that it’s me? such a lot o’ beds in the ward!’ That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she consider’d and said: ‘Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave ’em outside on the bed—The Lord has so *much* to see to! but, Emmie, you tell it Him plain, It’s the little girl with her arms lying out on the counterpane.’”

Mr. F. T. Palgrave said, “This is the most absolutely pathetic poem known to me.”

It may be interesting, in connection with two of the pieces in this volume, to quote a passage from Mr. T. Adolphus Trollope’s *Reminiscences*:—

“One day we made a most memorable excursion to visit Tennyson at Black Down. It was the first time I had ever

* A lady who had recited the “Northern Cobbler” at a village entertainment informed the author that at the point where the reformed cobbler was describing how he first became aware of the disastrous results of his intemperate habits, in the line,

“I looök’d cock-eyed at my noäse an’ I seeäd ’im a-gittin’ o’ fire,”

the village drunkard, who was among the audience, rose from his seat and left the room, muttering under his breath, “Women knows too much nowadaäys!”—*Canon Ainger*.

seen him. He walked with us round his garden, and to a point finely overlooking the country below, charmingly varied by cultivated land, meadow, and woodland. It was a magnificent day; but as I looked over the landscape I thought I understood, &c. . . . Our friends (Mr. and Mrs. Lewes) were evidently *personæ gratae* at the court of the Laureate; and after our walk he gave us the exquisite treat of reading to us the just completed manuscript of 'Rizpah.' And how he read it! Everybody thinks that he has been impressed by that wonderful poem to the full extent of the effect that it is capable of producing. They would be astonished at the increase of weird terror which thrills the hearer of the poet's own recital of it. He was very good-natured about it. It was explained to him by George Eliot that I should not be able to enjoy the reading unless I were close to him, so he placed me by his side. He detected me availing myself of that position to use my good eyes as well as my bad ears, and protested; but on my appeal *ad misericordiam*, and assurance that I should so enjoy the promised treat to infinitely greater effect, he allowed me to look over his shoulder as he read. After 'Rizpah' he read 'The Northern Cobbler' to us, also with wonderful effect. The difference between reading the printed lines and hearing them so read is truly that between looking on a black and white engraving and the coloured picture from which it has been taken. Another thing also struck me. The provincial dialect, which, when its peculiarities are indicated by letters, looks so uncouth as to be sometimes puzzling, seemed to produce no difficulty at all as he read it, though he in no wise mitigated it in the least. It seemed the absolutely natural and necessary presentation of the thoughts and emotions to be rendered. It was, in fact, a dramatic rendering of them of the highest order."

It was in connection with this volume that Mr. Theodore Watts wrote the following fine sonnet "To Alfred Tennyson, on his publishing, in his seventy-first year, the most

richly various volume of English verse that has appeared in his own century":—

"Beyond the peaks of Káf a rivulet springs
 Whose magic waters to a flood expand,
 Distilling, for all drinkers on each hand,
 The immortal sweets enveiled in mortal things.
 From honeyed flowers,—from balm of zephyr-wings,—
 From fiery blood of gems,* through all the land,
 The river draws;—then, in one rainbow-band,
 Ten leagues of nectar o'er the ocean flings.

"Steeped in the riches of a poet's years,
 Stained in all colours of man's destiny,
 So, Tennyson, thy widening river nears
 The misty main, and, taking now the sea,
 Makes rich and warm with human smiles and tears
 The ashen billows of Eternity."

Early in 1881 the most successful of Tennyson's dramatic works, "The Cup," was produced, under the direction of Mr. Irving, at the Lyceum Theatre. The story is founded on Plutarch's treatise, "De Claris Mulieribus," and had already been employed for dramatic purposes by Montanelli in the tragedy of "Camma," memorable as having given Ristori scope for one of her greatest triumphs. As the play has been printed, there is no necessity to describe the plot. Admirably acted by Mr. Irving and Miss Terry, and produced with lavish scenic splendour, "The Cup" had a very successful run. Its popularity, however, was not due entirely to acting and scenery; it was generally recognized that the Laureate had worked out his dramatic situations with tragic power and completeness, and that the language was characterized by a sustained and lofty grace which lent a new dignity to the stage, and gave hopes once more of a literary drama.

Lord Tennyson's sympathy with movements of an educational character was shown by his permitting the inclusion of his name in the list of vice-presidents of the Welsh National Eisteddfod. An application was made to him in

* "According to a Mohammedan tradition, the mountains of Káf are entirely composed of gems, whose reflected splendours colour the sky."

February to ally himself with the movement, and he consented to the extent mentioned, at the same time regretting that the state of his health prevented his attending any of the meetings. A month later we find him paying a brief visit to the metropolis, entertaining and being entertained in the exclusive circles of English culture. Mr. Gladstone was one of his guests, in company with a select party, on the occasion of a ceremonial dinner in Upper Belgrave Street.

We pass hurriedly over the powerful dramatic monologue, "Despair," and a poem on the "Charge of the Heavy Brigade," which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* and *Macmillan* respectively. The splendid achievement in which Scarlett, with three hundred horsemen, charged the whole strength of the Russian cavalry uphill had been somewhat overshadowed, despite Mr. Kinglake's eloquent and minute narrative, by the charge of the Light Brigade. It was a delicate sense of justice that led the Laureate, when Scarlett and his brave fellows were almost in danger of being forgotten, to chronicle the episode in verses which, if they are not destined to attain the same degree of popularity as the earlier effort, are certain to be handed down to future ages as part of the grand story of British heroism which that effort embodies with such undying force.

This chapter may be brought to a close with the record of a curious incident which brought Tennyson into momentary collision with a section, although a small one, of his countrymen. In March, 1882, his patriotic poem, "Hands all Round," set to music by Lady Tennyson, was sung by Mr. Santley at a concert in St. James's Hall, London. In this disentombed piece occur several references of this kind: "First drink a health," "To the great cause of Freedom drink," &c. Now that the poem, after thirty years of obscurity, was published in most of the journals, these allusions—used, of course, in a conventional sense—aroused the ire of a few of the people connected with the Temperance movement. The Executive Committee of the Good Templars, forgetful of the service Tennyson had

rendered to their cause by "The Northern Cobbler"—forgetful, too, of the fact that he had supported a movement for the Sunday closing of public-houses in the Isle of Wight—actually passed a resolution of remonstrance against the ode "in which drink was used as an expression of loyalty," and this absurd resolution was forwarded to Tennyson by Mr. Malins, the Chief Templar. In reply thereto, Mr. Malins received the following letter:—

"86, EATON SQUARE, LONDON.

"SIR,

"My father begs to thank the Committee of the Executive of the Grand Lodge of England Good Templars for their resolution. No one honours more highly the good work done by them than my father. I must, however, ask you to remember that the common cup has in all ages been employed as a sacred symbol of unity, and that my father has only used the word 'drink' in reference to this symbol. I much regret that it should have been otherwise understood.

"Faithfully yours,

"HALLAM TENNYSON."

There is no need, in this connection, to remind the reader that Lord Tennyson's writings were always on the side of morality. One of the causes of his popularity was the elevating and healthful tone of his poetry. No critic has ever been able to allege, with the smallest semblance of truth, that his works had anything but a wholesome effect. A little anecdote, told by Mrs. Ritchie, is worth repeating, if only as a set-off against the puerile protest of the Good Templars. One day, when walking in Covent Garden, he was stopped by a rough-looking man, who held out his hand and said, "You're Mr. Tennyson. Look here, sir, here am I. I've been drunk for six days out of seven, but if you will shake me by the hand, I'm d—d if ever I get drunk again!"

CHAPTER X.

IN November, 1882, a fourth drama by Tennyson was acted upon the stage. This time it was partly a prose work, founded on domestic incidents, and called "The Promise of May." It saw the light at the Globe Theatre, then under the management of Mrs. Bernard Beere, and the wags, with that questionable kind of wit which measures its feebleness by punning on names, said that whereas the Laureates of old wrote for wine, the present Laureate had set the example of writing "for Beere." The critics were tolerably unanimous in condemning the new play, which had the signal demerit of being outside their conception of orthodox dramatic requirements. No doubt it was "caviare to the general"—critics included. But the play, whatever its shortcomings on the score of unusualness, was, in the opinion of men capable of judging calmly of things new to their experience, a remarkable work of elaborate and skilful characterization. The chief character, Edgar, is a young English artist of good birth and fortune, who has a habit of examining the foundations of moral doctrines, and of weighing old-fashioned notions of patriotism in the conceptions of Universal Brotherhood. Ethical speculation has led to a soulless epicureanism—a Utilitarianism without its sanctions. Metaphysical doubts have, in like manner, landed him in rank materialism; while in his new-fangled contempt for the old beliefs, he talks of the "approaching great democratic deluge," of the futility of the marriage tie, of the superfluity of parental care and affection, since marriage is soon to be abolished and children reared by the State. This incarnation of the restless spirit of the age is launched in a quiet Lincolnshire village, far away from railways; where the well-to-do Farmer Steer, if he cannot read or write, can boast that he has, by dint of his own savings, become a yeoman like his forefathers; and where his honest but less substantial neighbour, Farmer Dobson,

declares that he hates books because they "puts folks off the old ways," and is ready with a homely refutation of Communistic doctrines by supposing that if he had "cut up his pig and divided it among the whole parish there would not be a dinner for any one, and I should have lost my pig." Edgar comes as a destroying serpent into this garden of innocence. On the ground that he has come to regard man as "a willy-nilly bundle of sensations," he wins the love of Farmer Steer's pretty daughter Eva—and then betrays and abandons her, with a cool acknowledgment that they had been "very happy together, and possibly they might meet again." Edgar, years after, returns to the neighbourhood, and endeavours to persuade the simple folk that he is not himself, by producing what purports to be an obituary notice of his death, but is, in fact, an announcement of the death of his father. In this he so far succeeds as to be accepted as a suitor by Dora Steer (a sister of the betrayed and deserted Eva), whom he proposes to himself to marry to "make amends" for his former conduct. Dora consents to become his wife, but his matrimonial penance is frustrated by the reappearance of his first victim, who drops dead with the excitement of the interview; whereupon Dora, respecting her sister's dying expressions of forgiveness, directs her old and faithful but hitherto despised admirer, Farmer Dobson, to conduct Edgar out of the farm, "over the last stile, beyond the last field," but to do him no violence.

It is necessary to give this brief abstract of the play; but it is even more necessary to give the analysis of the chief character which appeared, during the subsequent controversy, in one of the morning journals. "Edgar is not," says the writer, "as the critics will have it, a freethinker, drawn into crime by his Communistic theories; Edgar is not *not* a protest against the atheism of the age; Edgar is not even an honest Radical nor a sincere follower of Schopenhauer; he is nothing thorough and nothing sincere; but he is a criminal, and at the same time a gentleman. These are the two sides to his character. He has no conscience

until he is brought face to face with the consequences of his crime, and in the awakening of that conscience the poet has manifested his fullest and sublimest strength. At our first introduction to Edgar we see him perplexed with the haunting of a pleasure that has sated him. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' has been his motto; but we can detect that his appetite for all pleasure has begun to pall. He repeats wearily the formulæ of a philosophy which he has followed because it suits his mode of life. He plays with these formulæ, but they do not satisfy him. So long as he had on him the zest of libertinism he did not in all probability trouble himself with philosophy. But now he begins to hanker after his position as a gentleman—as a member of society. He feels he has outlawed himself. He has no one but himself to look to. He must endeavour to justify himself to himself. His selfishness compels him to take a step of which he feels the wickedness and repugnancy. The companionship of the girl he has betrayed no longer gives him pleasure; he hates her tears because they remind him of himself—his proper self. He abandons her with a pretence of satisfaction; but the philosophical formulæ he repeats no more satisfy him than they satisfy the poor girl whom he deserts. Her innocence has not, however, been wantonly sacrificed by the dramatist. She has sown the seed of repentance in her seducer, though the fruit is slow in ripening. Years after, he returns like the ghost of a murderer to the scene of his crime. He feels remorse. He is ashamed of it; he battles against it; he hurls the old formulæ at it; he acts the cynic more thoroughly than ever. But he is changed. He feels a desire to 'make amends.' Yet that desire is still only a form of selfishness. He has abandoned the 'Utopian idiocy' of Communism. Perhaps, as he says with the self-mockery that makes the character so individual and remarkable, because he has inherited estates. His position of gentleman is forced on his notice; he would qualify himself for it, selfishly and without doing excessive penance. To marry the surviving sister and rescue the old father from ruin would be a meritorious act.

He sets himself to perform it. At first everything goes well for him ; the old weapons of fascination that had worked the younger sister's ruin now conquer the heart of the elder. He is comfortable in his scheme of reparation, and lays 'that flattering unction to his soul.' Suddenly, however, the girl whom he has betrayed, and whom he thought dead, returns ; she hears him repeating to another the words of love she herself had caught from him and believed. 'Edgar !' she cries, and staggers forth from her concealment, as she forgives him with her last breath, and bids him make her sister happy. Then, and not till then, the true soul of the man rushes to his lips ; he recognizes his wickedness, he knows the blankness of his life. That is his punishment. He feels then, and will always feel, aspirations after good which he can never or only imperfectly fulfil. The position of independence on which he prided himself is wrested from him ; he is humiliated ; the instrument of his selfish repentance turns on him, with a forgiveness that annihilates him ; the bluff and honest farmer whom he despises triumphs over him, not with the brute force of an avenging hand, but with the pre-eminence of superior morality. Edgar quits the scene, never again, we can well believe, to renew his libertine existence, but to expiate with life-long contrition the monstrous wickedness of the past. This is dramatic justice."

It was not, perhaps, to be expected that the ordinary theatrical reporter, especially the ordinary theatrical reporter of the London press, should be able to detect the inner meaning of the Laureate in the character of Edgar. Still less was it to be expected that "the many-headed beast," accustomed to dramas of moving incident and commonplace *personæ*, should exhibit the requisite degree of penetration. There was, in fact, a general chorus of condemnation. The piece would never do, said the first-nighters. The wits of the comic papers attacked it with a banter that, in some cases, was tinged with virulence. No doubt the play, under these unhopeful auguries, would have been at once withdrawn, but for an incident which gave it a

new lease of life. One evening, at the commencement of the opening scene, the Marquis of Queensberry, who occupied a seat in the stalls, rose and loudly protested against the Laureate's representation of the principles of freethought. After considerable interruption the act was allowed to proceed, but immediately upon the fall of the curtain Lord Queensberry again rose and announced himself as a freethinker, and once more accused Mr. Tennyson of presenting a travesty of the sentiments of the sect to which he belonged. The Marquis of Queensberry was urged to leave the theatre. The next morning he explained, in a letter to a morning paper, that Edgar's comments on marriage had aroused his indignation, inasmuch as they were not the sentiments of avowed secularists and freethinkers. "I am," he said, "a secularist and a freethinker, and, though I repudiate it, a so-called atheist, and, as President of the British Secular Union, I protest against Mr. Tennyson's abominable caricature of an individual who, I presume, he would have us believe represents some body of people, which, thanks for the good of humanity, most certainly does not exist among freethinkers."

This episode resulted in a lively discussion, and for some weeks gave to "The Promise of May" an adventitious interest. It may be taken for granted that Lord Tennyson had not the slightest intention of putting forward Edgar as a typical freethinker, and the Marquis of Queensberry's hot-headed indignation was consequently as superfluous as it was unusual in the manner of its manifestation. Whatever may be said of the subtlety of characterization in Edgar, the purely intellectual interest of "The Promise of May" was obtained at the expense of what playgoers, in these degenerate days, are accustomed to consider the essentials of dramatic interest. The curiosity excited by the Queensberry episode soon died away, and the play itself was withdrawn after a run of six weeks.

In the autumn of 1883 the Laureate accompanied Mr. Gladstone on a sea-trip in the steamship *Pembroke Castle*, visiting several points of interest in the north-west corner

of Europe. At Copenhagen the two distinguished travellers were invited by the Danish King to meet the Czar and Czarina, the King and Queen of Greece, and the Princess of Wales. The royal and imperial personages, on the following day, paid a visit of inspection to the steamer; and after the sumptuous breakfast at which they were entertained, Mr. Tennyson, yielding to unanimous request, read with much spirit some of his own poems. He was warmly applauded, "the Royal ladies," says the report, "being especially demonstrative in the expression of their admiration." On the outward voyage, the Premier and Mr. Tennyson were presented with the freedom of the burgh of Kirkwall, on which occasion Mr. Gladstone, in returning thanks for the honour, made the following remarks:—

"I believe that in this case the honour is not on one side only, but on both, and you will do well to associate yourself with him, as well as ask him to associate himself with you. Mr. Tennyson's life and labours correspond in point of time as nearly as possible to my own, but Mr. Tennyson's exertions have been on a higher plane of human action than my own. He has worked in a higher field, and his work will be more durable. We public men—who play a part which places us much in view of our countrymen—we are subject to the danger of being momentarily intoxicated by the kindness, the undue homage of kindness, we may receive. It is our business to speak, but the words which we speak have wings, and fly away and disappear. The work of Mr. Tennyson is of a higher order. I anticipate for him the immortality for which England and Scotland have supplied, in the course of their long national life, many claims. Your record to-day, of the additions which have been made to your municipal body may happen to be examined in distant times, and some may ask with regard to the Prime Minister, 'Who, was, he, and what did he do?' (Cries of 'No, no.') 'We know, nothing about him.' (Laughter.) But, the Poet Laureate has written his own song on the hearts of his countrymen, that can never die. (Cheers.) Time is powerless, against him, and I believe this, that, were the period of the,

inquiry to be so long distant as between this day and the time when Maeshowe was built, still, in regard to the Poet Laureate of to-day, there would be no difficulty in stating who he was and what he had done to raise the intellects and hearts of his fellow-creatures to a higher level, and by so doing acquire a deathless fame."

Later on in the same year it was announced that the Queen had offered a peerage to Mr. Tennyson, and that he had accepted it. The offer did honour both to the Queen and to her advisers. It constituted a new departure, in harmony with the highest claims of genius. Never before had the principle been admitted of ennobling an author solely for his achievements in the field of authorship. Of the three poets of this generation who had been made peers, not one was marked out for the distinction by his poetry alone. Macaulay was a politician, and rendered valuable political service to his party; Bulwer Lytton was a statesman and a Cabinet Minister; Monckton Milnes was a man of wealth and social influence. Previously to 1883 the peerage had been recruited from the ranks of statesmen, lawyers, military and naval commanders, and rich commoners. In Mr. Tennyson's case, the Queen distinctly recognized claims outside these privileged classes, and paid literature a graceful and well-merited compliment, no doubt having regard also to the statesmanlike wisdom shown in his political poems. Still, with a full appreciation of these considerations, the feeling found expression in many quarters that Mr. Tennyson would confer far greater lustre on the House of Lords than the House of Lords could possibly confer upon him. Not only could no fame accrue to him from a title, but it was urged that, by taking one, he was scarcely true to his own ideals—at all events, that he did not rise to the height of his own inspiration. There is no need to quote here the caustic parody entitled "*Baron Vere de Vere*," in which one well-known periodical expressed dislike of the aristocracy quite as much as dissatisfaction with Lord Tennyson. It was felt, even by those who believed plain Alfred Tennyson to be as great as *Lord* Tennyson, that

the bitterness of this particular parody was only surpassed by its bad taste. Public opinion soon came round to a recognition of the fitness of the distinction, and the Queen showed the broadness and sympathy of her views by taking the unprecedented course of ennobling a mere man of letters.

Mr. Tennyson was gazetted Baron of Aldworth and Farringford on January 18, 1884. Letters of congratulation showered in upon him, among them being one which recounted the delight of an old woman named Susan Epton, who had been in the service of the poet's father, and, at a later date, lady's-maid to Mrs. Tennyson. In reference to this incident Lord Tennyson wrote: "I have received many letters of congratulation, some from great lords and ladies; but the affectionate remembrance of good old Susan Epton and her sister touched me more than all these. I am grieved that the former is stone blind. Will you please give her my kindest remembrance?"

One of the few occasions on which Lord Tennyson voted in the House of Peers was in support of the County Franchise Bill, in the memorable division when that important measure was rejected.

An episode of interest occurred in the spring of 1884. An aged and blind Sheffield workman sent the Laureate some verses which he had written, and Lord Tennyson wrote the following acknowledgment:—

"FARRINGFORD, FRESHWATER, I.W.,

"March 21, 1884.

"DEAR SIR,

"I should have a heart harder than your anvil if I were not deeply interested by what you tell me. I thank you for your pretty verses. The spirit which inspires them should give the lesson of cheerful resignation and thankfulness and faith to all. Being able to do this by writing such verses, you will always have work of the noblest and best to do. Accept from me every best wish, and believe me, truly yours,

"TENNYSON.

"TO MR. JOSEPH SENIOR."

Early in January, 1885, Lord Tennyson was elected President of the Chess Association. This gave rise to some jocular lines in *Punch*, of which a couple of verses may be quoted:—

“ Get out the Board of Black and White,
That charms my learned leisure !
Where ‘ all is square ’ it must be right
For me to find my pleasure.
Those Kingly Idylls once I wrote,
But now I fear ‘ tis fated,
If I don’t idle with the King
My life would be stale-mated.

“ So I shall rule for months and years
The noble Chess Society ;
I’ll dub my Knights *Sir Bediveres*,
Or *Modreds*, for variety ;
And when I move my Queen about,
If Pawns should dare to check it,
I’ll kick the Chess-board inside out,
Like Henry in my *Becket*.”

It is only necessary to allude in passing to the acceptance by Lord Tennyson of the presidency of the Incorporated Society of Authors ; and to the marriage of his eldest son Hallam, who for many years was his companion, adviser, and friend. These are but scraps in the biographical record ; nevertheless, it would be incomplete without them. A larger measure of interest belongs to a letter giving Tennyson’s views on the question of plagiarism and suggestion, which was published in the second edition of Mr. S. E. Dawson’s “ Study of Lord Tennyson’s Poem ‘ The Princess ’ ” (Montreal). A good deal of diligence had been expended by Mr. J. Churton Collins, and other critics, in the endeavour to trace parallelisms between passages in the Laureate’s poems and similar modes of expression in the works of other poets. It has always seemed to us that this labour was a little superfluous, and that it established nothing beyond the erudition of the critic. Most students of Tennyson will read his opinion of these searching comparisons with a good deal of sympathy.

“ Your explanatory notes are very much to the purpose, and I do not object to your finding parallelisms. They must always recur. A gentleman (a Chinese scholar) some

time ago wrote to me, saying that in an unknown untranslated poem there were two whole lines of mine almost word for word. Why not? Are not human eyes all over the world looking at the same objects, and must there not consequently be coincidences of thought and impressions and expressions? It is scarcely possible for any one to say or write anything, in this late time of the world, to which in the rest of the literature of the world a parallel could not somewhere be found. But when you say that this passage or that was suggested by Wordsworth, or Shelley, or another, I demur, and, more, I wholly disagree. There was a period in my life when, as an artist—Turner, for instance—takes rough sketches of landscape, &c., in order to work them eventually into some great picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in nature. I never put these down, and many and many a line has gone away on the north wind, but some remain, *e.g.* :—

“ ‘A full sea glared with muffled moonlight.’

Suggestion: the sea one night at Torquay, when Torquay was the most lovely sea village in England, though now a smoky town; the sky was covered with thin vapour, and the moon was behind it.

“ ‘A great black cloud
Drags inward from the deep.’

Suggestion: a coming storm seen from the top of Snowdon

“ ‘In the ‘Idylls of the King’ :—

“ ‘With all
Its stormy crests that smote against the skies.’

Suggestion: a storm which came upon us in the middle of the North Sea.

“ ‘As the water-lily starts and slides.’

Suggestion: water-lilies in my own pond, seen on a gusty day with my own eyes. They did start and slide in the sudden puffs of wind, till caught and stayed by the tether

of their own stalks,—quite as true as Wordsworth's simile, and more in detail.

“ ‘A wild wind shook—
Follow, follow, thou shalt win.’

Suggestion: I was walking in the New Forest. A wind did arise and—

“ ‘Shake the songs, the whispers, and the shrieks
Of the wild wood together.’

“The wind, I believe, was a west wind, but because I wished the Prince to go south I turned the wind to the south, and naturally the wind still said, ‘Follow.’ I believe the resemblance which you note is just a chance one. Shelley's lines are not familiar to me, though, of course, if they occur in the ‘Prometheus’ I must have read them. I could multiply instances, but I will not bore you; and far indeed I am from asserting that books, as well as Nature, are not, and ought not to be, suggestive to the poet. I am sure that I myself and many others find a peculiar charm in those passages of such great masters as Virgil or Milton, where they adopt the creation of a bygone poet, and reclothe it more or less according to their own fancy. But there is, I fear, a prosaic set growing up amongst us, editors of booklets, bookworms, index hunters, or men of great memories and no imagination—who impute themselves to the poet, and so believe that he, too, has no imagination, but is for ever poking his nose between the pages of some old volume in order to see what he can appropriate. They will not allow one to say ‘Ring the bells’ without finding that we have taken it from Sir P. Sidney, or even to use such a simple expression as the ocean ‘roars’ without finding out the precise verse in Homer or Horace from which we have plagiarized it. (Fact!) I have known an old fishwife, who had lost two sons at sea, clench her fist at the advancing tide on a stormy day, and cry out, ‘Ay, roar; do! How I hate to see thee show thy white teeth!’ Now, if I had adopted her exclamation, and put it in the mouth of some old woman in one of my poems, I dare say the critics

would have thought it original enough, but would most likely have advised me to go to Nature for my old woman, and not to my imagination; and, indeed, it is a strong figure. Here is another little anecdote about suggestion. When I was about twenty or twenty-one I went on a tour to the Pyrenees. Lying among these mountains, before the waterfall that comes down a thousand or twelve hundred feet, I sketched it (according to my custom then) in these words—

“ ‘Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn.’ ”

When I printed this, a critic informed me that ‘lawn’ was the material used in theatres to imitate a waterfall, and graciously added, ‘Mr. Tennyson should not go to the boards of a theatre, but to Nature herself, for his suggestions.’ And I had gone to Nature herself. I think it a moot point whether, if I had known how that effect was produced on the stage, I should have ventured to publish the line.”

In 1885, attention having been drawn in the *Pall Mall Gazette* to the unsatisfactory condition of the navy, Lord Tennyson, in acknowledging the receipt of copies of the articles referred to, said he “had no doubt the navy is much below its proper strength.” The disclosures of England’s naval weakness seem to have oppressed the mind of the poet, for shortly after he sent to the *Times* some spirited and indignant stanzas, reproaching the authorities with their neglect, and predicting that if by such neglect they had compassed England’s disgrace, “the wild mob’s million feet” would kick them from their place—“but then—too late, too late.” *Punch* had a clever drawing on the subject, Tennyson being represented as Guy Fawkes blowing up the authorities of the Admiralty with a quill pen.

Tennyson was deeply moved by the tragic death of General Gordon, in whose philanthropic enterprises he took a warm interest. Before Gordon went to the Mauritius, he went to Tennyson’s London house in order to explain his idea of a camp for training poor boys for

the army. On entering the room, Gordon at once said, "I want you to do something for our young soldiers, Mr. Tennyson; you are one of the few men who can." The talk then turned upon recruits and the leavening of the ranks with well-trained lads, educated in military training-camps, and Gordon most warmly advocated this, especially for poor boys. On a subsequent occasion, Tennyson learnt more of what Gordon thought was necessary for these camps, and he formed the belief that their establishment would supply a very real want. "He could not but feel," says Mr. Hallam Tennyson, "that the man whom all the world honoured, and who in his unweariable self-sacrifice and in his simple Christian heroism was worthy of all honour, had left as a legacy to England the duty of providing such a military training-camp." *Apropos* of this, a correspondent of the *New York Herald* tried to draw Tennyson on the subject of the Gordon Memorial. He was successful to this extent, that the poet said, "Some of your New York publishers have published nearly all of my poems, and I have never received a penny from any of them. Should they now subscribe liberally to our Gordon Memorial, I should feel as if ample atonement were made."

On being asked by the poet Whittier to write an epitaph for Gordon, Lord Tennyson sent the following reply:—

"DEAR MR. WHITTIER,

"Your request has been forwarded to me, and I herein send you an epitaph for Gordon in our Westminster Abbey, *i.e.*, for his cenotaph:—

"Warrior of God, man's friend—not here below,
But somewhere dead far in the waste Soudan—
Thou livest in all hearts, for all nien know
This earth hath borne no simpler, nobler man."

"With best wishes,

"Yours very faithfully,

"TENNYSON."

About the same time a young Harvard collegiate, Mr. A. M. Cummings, wrote a poem on "Alfred Tennyson" for the *Boston Journal*. A copy was mailed to the Laureate, and he replied to the compliment by this letter to Mr. Cummings :—

"DEAR SIR,

"I thank you for your fine poem. It is over-praise; but then, during the greatest part of my life I have been so praised by our English press that a dose of over-praise will not turn me giddy.

"Yours very faithfully,

"TENNYSON."

In November, 1885, Mr. Palgrave, who was standing for the Oxford Professorship of Poetry, received the following recommendation from Lord Tennyson :—

"ALDWORTH, HASLEMERE, SURREY.

"MY DEAR PALGRAVE,

"I hear to-day that you are a candidate for the Oxford Professorship of Poetry. I know no one worthier of that Chair than yourself, and I most heartily wish you success.

"Yours ever,

"TENNYSON."

A month later he wrote as follows to Mr. Bosworth Smith on the subject of Disestablishment :—

"December 12, 1885.

"DEAR SIR,

"I thank you for your collected letters on the subject of Disestablishment. The letters, as they have reached me separately, I have read with the greatest interest. With you, I believe that the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church would prelude the downfall of much that is greatest and best in England. Abuses there are, no doubt, in the Church as elsewhere, but these are not past remedy.

As to any 'vital changes in our Constitution,' I could wish that some of our prominent politicians who look to America as their ideal might borrow from her an equivalent to that conservatively restrictive provision under the Fifth Article of her Constitution. I believe that it would be a great safeguard to our own in these days of ignorant and reckless theorists.

"I am yours truly,

"TENNYSON."

"To R. BOSWORTH SMITH, Esq."

"Tiresias, and other Poems," dedicated to "my good friend Robert Browning," was published in 1885. In the introductory verses "To E. Fitzgerald" Tennyson furnishes an interesting bit of autobiography, telling how he once experimented with vegetarianism, and its dire effects:—

"And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,
And seemed at first 'a thing enskied'
(As Shakespeare has it), airy-light
To float above the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual height
Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again."

This volume contains a number of poems that had previously been published in a separate form, together with several that were new. "To-morrow" is a characteristic soliloquy in the Irish brogue, and "The Spinster's Sweet-arts," in the Lincolnshire dialect, is a quaintly-humorous address by an old maiden lady to her cats. "Balin and Balan" seems to belong to the "Idylls of the King" series. This volume contained the exquisite lines "To Virgil" written at the request of the Mantuans for the nineteenth century of the Roman poet's death.

In 1886 the poet sustained a cruel bereavement in the death of his son Lionel at the early age of thirty-two. This sad event took place on board the *Chusan*, at Aden. The Hon. Lionel Tennyson had been, in company with his wife (a daughter of Mr. Arthur Locker), on a visit to Lord Dufferin, and while in India he caught a jungle-fever, which

proved fatal. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, he gave promise of a career of usefulness and distinction. He had been a frequent contributor to our periodical literature, and his writings in the *Nineteenth Century* and *Cornhill* had proved that he inherited a great deal of literary ability and imagination from his father. The year before his death he had compiled a valuable report on India for the India Office, where for some years he had held a post in the political and secret department. "Few men," says one who knew him well, "took a keener interest in Indian affairs, and it is melancholy to reflect now upon the eager expectation of profit as well as enjoyment with which he set out on his Indian tour. It was remarkable in him that in his choice of occupation and reading he followed his own bent entirely, never being guided merely by the fashion of the hour or the suggestions of others. He was essentially original—a voice and not an echo. But I think his most remarkable quality was an absolute, invariable, uncompromising truthfulness in every word and act of his life, great and small. He was incapable of affectation or pretence of any kind. Though he had a strong sense of humour, he would spoil a good story rather than not describe events exactly as they occurred."

It is needless to say that Lord and Lady Tennyson received expressions of condolence from all parts of the world. One telegram was from New Jersey, United States, and was as follows:—"Accept the earnest sympathy of an American friend who sorrows in your loss. Accept also this expression of his pleasure at the sentiments so happily voiced in the ode you have just given to England. God grant it may stand a sturdy sea-wall against the tide of disunion and degeneracy." The ode referred to was set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, and sung at the opening of the Colonial Exhibition.

It has been mentioned in a previous chapter that Tennyson, in the earlier part of his career, often dined at the Cock in Fleet Street. He has recorded the fact himself in the verses entitled "Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue,"

wherein occur frequent references to the quality and repute of the old hostelry. Apostrophizing "The Plump Head-waiter," when mellow Death shall call him from the boxes, the poet says,—

"No carved cross-bones, the types of Death,
Shall show thee past to heaven :
But carved cross-pipes, and, underneath,
A pint-pot, neatly graven."

In the course of time the old chop-house underwent demolition, and a new and imposing structure, more suitable to the requirements of the day, was erected in its place. The then occupiers, Messrs Spiers & Pond, were thoughtful enough to send Lord Tennyson one of the old tankards, with the inscription, "A pint-pot, neatly graven," and the Poet Laureate, in expressing his thanks, said he would keep it as an heirloom in his family, "as a memorial not only of the old vanished tavern, but also of their kindness." *Punch* "improved the occasion" with some verses, of which one may be quoted:—

"No more 'libations to the muse'
The plump-cropp'd fowl may witness ;
But die 'twill not, and who'll refuse
To see poetic fitness
In mellow-voiced 'Will Waterproof'
Taking, as to a haven,
Beneath his lordly later roof,
That 'pint-pot, neatly graven'?"

Here is a little incident which we quote from an article by the Rev. Henry Smith in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*:—

"Sunday morning, Dec. 26, 1886, will not soon be forgotten by ministers and local preachers who had to take appointments in distant places in the Isle of Wight. It was one of the wildest mornings imaginable. One veteran local preacher, while pressing on against wind and rain, fell dead within a short distance of Freshwater Wesleyan Chapel. Lord Tennyson came upon the scene in a few minutes, with his friend Professor Ralston. The kindly interest taken by the Laureate in the widow and

friends of the honoured local preacher will never be forgotten. The letter of sympathy contained expressions of the poet's personal belief as to the honour and blessedness of being engaged in so glorious a work as that of the Wesleyan local preacher. He was much impressed with the circumstance that the preacher's notes indicated that the sermon that morning was to be one of a specially gladsome character. Lord Tennyson wrote: 'I cannot but look upon his death as a happy one; sudden, painless, while he was on his way to his chapel to render thanks and praise to his Maker. Our Liturgy prays against sudden death; but I myself could pray for such a sudden death as Isaac Porter's.'"

In 1886 Lord Tennyson brought out a new poem, "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," which he described in the dedication to his wife as a "dramatic monologue." The same volume contained one or two minor pieces, and the first-published version of "The Promise of May." It was a distinctly happy thought of the poet to revise by the experience and judgment of age the passionate creed of the earlier "Locksley Hall." To a certain extent the revision partakes of the character of a recantation. The fictitious personal interest is, however, preserved, and we learn that the "shallow-hearted" Amy died a year after her marriage in giving birth to a child; that her husband survived to the age of eighty; that her jilted lover, instead of withering by despair, had married some one else, and lived a happy wedded life of forty years. In the concluding passages of this noble sequel the poet speaks with tremendous indignation of some of the dark accompaniments of the march of Progress—city children blackening soul and sense in city slime; crime and hunger casting maidens by the thousand on the street; the master scrimping his haggard sempstress of her daily bread; and the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor. All through there are the same strong metrical swing and the same felicitous force of diction that characterized the first "Locksley Hall." Respecting the philosophy of the two poems, opinions will always differ. Each is typical of the

emotions its circumstances are supposed to have called forth. The one is the passionate protest of Youth ; the other is the calmer sagacity of Age. For the young, full of romantic ideals and quickened with sentiment, the earlier will always be the favourite ; to men and women who have fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf, and have learnt by experience the folly of those hot fires which scorched them in the bygone days, the later will have a more commanding interest and a director sympathy.

The fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Société des Gens de Lettres took place in 1887, and the following letter, signed by Lord Tennyson, President of the Incorporated Society of Authors, was sent to the President of the Société :—

“As President of the Incorporated Society of Authors, and at the request of its council and members, I desire to express to M. Jules Claretie and the council of the Société des Gens de Lettres the cordial felicitations of the authors of England to the authors of France on the happy celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the existence of their association.—TENNYSON.”

In the same year the following letter was addressed by Lord Tennyson to the American poet, Walt Whitman :—

“Nov. 15, 1887.

“DEAR WALT WHITMAN,

“I thank you for your kind thought of me. I value the photograph much, and I wish that I could see not only this sun-picture, excellent as I am told it is, but also the living original. May he still live and flourish for many years to be. The coming year should give new life to every American who has breathed a breath of that soul which inspired the great founders of the American Constitution, whose work you are to celebrate. Truly, the mother country, pondering on this, may feel that

how much soever the daughter owes to her, she, the mother, has nevertheless something to learn from the daughter. Especially I would note the care taken to guard a noble Constitution from rash and unwise innovators.

“I am always yours,

“TENNYSON.”

In the latter part of 1888 Tennyson suffered acutely from a severe attack of rheumatic gout, brought on by getting wet to the skin on two or three occasions. At one time, owing to the height of the fever, the doctors were seriously anxious about his state, but the disease was fortunately overcome, and although he remained in a very weak state for some time afterwards, he gradually regained his usual health, and, considering his advanced years, enjoyed an exceptional degree of robustness.

It may not be inappropriate to quote here the appreciative verses which appeared in *Punch* on the occasion of the Poet Laureate's eightieth birthday:—

“Poet of passion pure and tempered strength,
 Our England's pride in these hysteric days
 Of fevered fancyings, and of fretful lays;
 We bless kind fate that gave thee golden length
 Of life and singing-season. Still sing on!
 Thy manly music ill our hearts can spare,
 Fresh as the balmy breath of English air
 Rolling o'er gardens e'er the rose is gone,
 And mellow as the flutings loud or low
 That haunt the laurels round an English lawn.
 May rosy radiance as of summer dawn
 Lighten the lingering eve whose footing slow
 Softly approaches such a son of song,
 So loyal, and so reverent, so unstained,
 As since Spring first on English meadows rained
 Largess of blossoms, scarce hath joined our throng
 Of native minstrels. Live! Our restless day
 Beholds no brow so worthy of the bay!”

“Demeter, and other Poems,” published in 1889, opens with some exquisite lines to the Marquis of Dufferin, in

which the following pathetic reference is made to the death of Lionel Tennyson :—

- “ For he—your India was his Fate,
And drew him over sea to you—
He fain had ranged her thro’ and thro’,
To serve her myriads and the State,—
- “ A soul that, watch’d from earliest youth,
And on thro’ many a brightening year,
Had never swerved for craft or fear,
By one side-path from simple truth ;
- “ Who might have chased and claspt Renown,
And caught her chaplet here—and there
In haunts of jungle-poison’d air
The flame of life went wavering down ;
- “ But ere he left your fatal shore,
And lay on that funereal boat,
Dying, ‘ Unspeakable,’ he wrote,
‘ Their kindness,’ and he wrote no more ;
- “ And sacred is the latest word ;
And now the Was, the Might-have-been,
And those lone rites I have not seen,
And one drear sound I have not heard,
- “ Are dreams that scarce will let me be.
Not there to bid my boy farewell,
When that within the coffin fell—
Fell and flash’d into the Red Sea,
- “ Beneath a hard Arabian moon
And alien stars. To question, why
The sons before the fathers die,
Not mine ! and I may meet him soon.”

This volume, besides the poem which gives it its title, contains a touching piece in the Lincolnshire dialect about the fidelity of a dog which saved its master’s child from burning. “The Ring,” dedicated to the late Mr. Russell Lowell, is a somewhat weird narrative, cast in the form of a dialogue between father and daughter, containing some passages of great power. “Forlorn” and the verses on “The Leper’s Bride” are charged with intensity of impassioned expression. In the lines “To Ulysses” (by whom is meant the late W. G. Palgrave), the poet

declares his preference for English scenery, and "the quarried downs of Wight," to the "larger light on broader zones beyond the foam." "The Progress of Spring," "Romney's Remorse," "Merlin and the Gleam," lines "By an Evolutionist," and some minor poems, also appeared in this volume, which concluded with some beautiful verses entitled "Crossing the Bar," in which Tennyson turns his gaze towards the approaching close of life in terms of simple but most exquisite pathos. Canon Ainger says that this poem—"too sacred for praise or comment"—was written in Lord Tennyson's eighty-first year, on a day when he journeyed across the Solent from Aldworth to Farringford.

Allusion has already been made, in connection with "Locksley Hall," to the unfounded rumour that a romance of Tennyson's own life was referred to in it. A similar story gained currency in 1890. The Rev. Charles Yeld, of Nottingham, unearthed some stanzas addressed by the poet many years previously to a Miss Bradshaw. Mr. Yeld appears to have assumed that Tennyson was in love with the young lady. He related that one day, while young Mr. Tennyson was out driving with Miss Bradshaw, her mother, and three other ladies, some one asked the time. On this Tennyson took out his watch, whereupon Miss Bradshaw leaned over a little, and her worshipper exclaimed, "Don't!" "Why am I not to look?" asked the young lady; to which Tennyson replied, "No, it will stop to look at you." Mr. Yeld communicated this story and the verses to the members of the Nottingham Literary Club. The verses were as follows:—

"Because she bore the iron name
Of him who doomed his king to die,
I deemed her one of stately frame,
And looks to awe the stander-by;
But found a maiden tender, shy,
With fair blue eyes, and winning sweet,
And longed to kiss her hands, and lie
A thousand summers at her feet."

The publication of this so-called "romance" appears to have been considered indiscreet, in the first instance, by

Mr. Yeld himself, for he wrote to the Laureate apologizing for having dealt with the incident so freely. This apology elicited the following letter :—

“ FARRINGFORD, FRESHWATER,
 “ I. OF WIGHT,
 “ Feb. 1, 1890.

“ SIR,

My father desires me to acknowledge the receipt of your apology. He was very much surprised at the liberty which had been taken in quoting certain MS. lines of his without either his leave or that of the Bradshaws. In answer to your letter, I have to inform you that the lines in question were a mere complimentary *jeu d'esprit*, and that there was no romance in the matter.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir, .

“ Your obedient servant,

“ HALLAM TENNYSON.

“ REV. CHARLES YELD.”

Mr. Yeld afterwards wrote to the press explaining that he did not feel that he was betraying any confidence in quoting the verses to the Literary Club as a proof of the early age at which the Laureate's genius began to show itself. The incident of the watch, he said, was told him five-and-twenty years before by the lady's brother, also subsequently by the lady herself. “ When,” he added, “ my attention was called to the somewhat silly comment of a contemporary, I wrote both to Lord Tennyson and to the lady's son, deprecating any thought of causing annoyance to either. From the one I received a kind letter, frankly accepting my apology; from the other I received the very ungracious (you call it ‘ dignified ’) letter which Mr. Hallam Tennyson forwarded for publication to the *Athenæum*. It seems to me that both the poem and the *bon mot* deserve to be recorded, as indeed they were bound to be, in any biography of the poet.”

In March, 1891, Lord Tennyson, in answer to a note from the World's Fair Auxiliary Association, tendering him honorary membership, and suggesting that he should write a song for the opening, wrote as follows:—"I accept your offer of honorary membership not without gratitude; but as for a song, I am an old man verging on eighty-two, and I cannot promise."

On the occasion of Lord Tennyson's eighty-second birthday, the following details of his manner of life appeared in a widely-circulated journal:—

"Notwithstanding his years and the effects of a severe illness two or three years since, which seriously crippled his strength and energy, he enjoys excellent health. In fact, he is now seen more in the neighbourhood of his estates than for many years past. In spite of his weight of years, the poet still covers a considerable distance every day, either across Blackdown or along the cliff walks at Freshwater Bay. In replying to the writer of the present article, the Hon. Hallam Tennyson said the other day that his Lordship was 'very well, and has walked his four miles to-day with me.' As a rule, the poet and his family spend the summer months at Aldworth, and in October usually depart for Freshwater. During his Lordship's absence at Haslemere the approaches to Farringford present a very forbidding aspect. The principal entrance-gate—iron-spiked and chained—is marked 'private,' and the entrance by the farm bears a notice to the effect that 'any persons found trespassing will be prosecuted.' It was not always so difficult to obtain admittance to the house and grounds, but the rudeness and wanton mischief formerly experienced has necessarily imposed penalties on others who know how to behave themselves, and now Farringford Park is strictly closed to strangers. Flowers were picked and ferns dug up wholesale, and one is not surprised, therefore, to find this notice in the private road: 'No one is allowed to touch the ferns and flowers in this private carriage-road. By order.' One golden opportunity, however, presents itself in the year

to the admiring yet inquisitive lover of Tennyson. The Freshwater Flower Show is usually held in the park at the end of August, and hundreds from all parts of the island take advantage of the event and explore the beautiful surroundings. In fact, it is well known locally that the flower show is not the only attraction. Tennyson, however, is never present at these functions, and the duty of entertaining the visitors is undertaken by the Hon. Hallam Tennyson. Tennyson does not take any great interest in local affairs. He has been known to nominate a County Councillor in the Isle of Wight, but beyond that he is not a keen politician. He does not even attend the Primrose League ; while his form, it is said, has not darkened the doors of the parish church for many years. One of the Haslemere tradesmen, who is a Nonconformist village preacher, tells with much satisfaction how he once numbered Tennyson in his audience. He was going over Blackdown on a preaching visit, and, having started somewhat earlier, rested on a bank to rehearse his discourse, as he thought, to the summer breeze. On nearly reaching its conclusion he found to his surprise that he was not alone, for on the other side of the bank there were Tennyson and the Duke of Argyll. They had evidently been listeners some time, but finding their presence was noticed made off as quickly as possible. It is to be hoped that the 'seed did not fall into stony ground,' for it must have been the only sermon that the poet had heard for many years. Notwithstanding the fact that he is a non-churchgoer, Tennyson is friendly with local clergy, and visits them at rare intervals. At Freshwater his favourite companion is the Rev. P. Haythornthwaite, the Roman Catholic priest. 'Father Peter,' as he is commonly called, is well known over the southern part of the island. He is extremely popular with all classes for his *bonhomie*, and is, besides, a scholar, and a gentleman. Rarely a day passes but 'Father Peter' pays a visit to the poet when he is staying at Farringford House. The only event which draws Tennyson from his retirement is the annual Haslemere Flower Show,

held in the middle of August, in the lovely grounds of Mr. J. Stewart Hodgson, at Lythe Hill. He is very friendly with the Hodgsons, who are his nearest neighbours, and possess a beautiful house adorned with many noble works of art. Tennyson has very few dealings with the villagers. They come and go unheeding and unheeded, but there are a few of the older inhabitants with whom he is more or less friendly. One shopkeeper, who possesses a beautiful old-fashioned garden with choice apple trees, often receives the poet. When the apples are ripening, he comes into the shop, and, shuffling through into the garden, mutters, 'How's your apples?' Among his miscellaneous stock this tradesman keeps a supply of cheap 'yellow-back' novels, and at one time, when a fresh parcel arrived, the poet would hunt over them for 'something to read.' The poet's household consists of Lady Tennyson and his son and son's wife. Her ladyship is a confirmed invalid, and but rarely seen outside the grounds. But notwithstanding her physical ailments her talents as a composer have been lately recognized, and to-day a concert is to be held in the Assembly Rooms, Freshwater, in honour of the poet's birthday, when some of Lady Tennyson's music will be sung and played. 'Mr. Hallam,' as the villagers call him, is a fine specimen of an English country gentleman, and acts as his father's secretary and right-hand supporter. Tennyson rarely writes private letters now, and, practically speaking, leaves his correspondence to his son. However skilfully worded the epistle might be framed, the autograph-hunter would miserably fail in his purpose; though only a week since a local official was boasting to the writer that he held the poet's signature. It appears that he refused to give up a consignment of wine until Tennyson, and Tennyson alone, wrote his name as a receipt. Needless to say, this is carefully and proudly preserved."

The persecution of the Russian Jews having been brought under the particular notice of Lord Tennyson, he wrote as follows to a member of the Russo-Jewish Committee:—

"Oct. 1, 1891.

"SIR,

"I have read what is reported of the Russian persecutions by your paper, and by the press generally; and if that be true, I can only say that Russia has disgraced her church and her nationality. I once met the Czar. He seemed a kind and good-natured man. I can scarcely believe that he is fully aware of the barbarities perpetrated with his apparent sanction.

"TENNYSON."

Reference has been made on one or two occasions in the course of the narrative to the fancy value of the scarce earlier poems by Tennyson, and the first editions of his various works. In this connection the following account of a sale of Tennysoniana at Sotheby's early in 1891, will be read with interest by bibliophiles:—

"A collection of poems and stanzas, which have appeared in annuals, magazines, and various publications, including a proof of the poem, 'Hands all Round,' which has the author's MS. corrections, and a note signed 'A. T.,' calling the printer's attention to the rewritten verse, was sold for £25 10s. A copy of Butler's 'Atlas of Ancient Geography,' which belonged to Tennyson when at school, with his autograph inside the cover, a few humorous scrawls, and a most interesting list of (apparently) some of his fellow-students—Leighton, Frere, Selwyn, Herbert, Merivale, Barham, Monk, Hallam, &c.—realized £11. A copy of 'Poems by Two Brothers' (Alfred and Charles Tennyson), a fine, clean, uncut copy in the original boards, realized £17. It is interesting to remember in connection with this book that the publishers, Messrs. J. & J. Jackson, Louth, in 1827 paid the author £10 for the copyright of the work, of which a single copy has just realized £7 over and above that sum. The famous poem, 'Timbuctoo,' for which Tennyson was awarded the Chancellor's medal at Cam-

bridge in 1829, was knocked down for £2 18s. 'Poems, chiefly Lyrical,' which was published in 1830, and contains several pieces afterwards suppressed, went for £5; and Moxon's 1833 edition of 'Poems'—three sonnets and two other pieces published in this volume were afterwards suppressed—went for £6. Samuel Rogers's copy of the first edition of the 'Collected Poems of Tennyson,' 1842, fetched £5 15s.; the first edition of 'In Memoriam,' £4 4s. Several lots of Tennysonianana of great interest were withdrawn from this sale."

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the last year of his life Lord Tennyson exhibited a reserve of physical strength and a measure of intellectual activity quite uncommon for one who had entered upon his eighty-fourth year. He produced a dramatic piece entitled *The Foresters*, founded on the Robin Hood legend, which was published in England in book form, and acted simultaneously at Mr. Daly's theatre in New York. It is reported that a new volume of poems might have been expected from him shortly; and Mr. Irving has publicly announced that *Becket*—condensed, of course, to suit stage exigencies—would be presented at the Lyceum during the current season. One little matter may be mentioned as shewing the keen interest his lordship took, up to the last, in public affairs. On the eve of the still recent general election he permitted the publication of the following laconic opinion:—

" June 28.

" SIR,

" I love Mr. Gladstone, but hate his present Irish policy.

" I am, yours faithfully,

" TENNYSON."

In that same month of June, the poet went on a yachting cruise, and amongst other places visited Jersey. A young local poet named Le Sueur having sent him a poetical greeting, the Laureate shortly afterwards acknowledged it in a cordial note in his own handwriting.

Lord Tennyson was generally believed to be in excellent health when, on Oct. 3rd., the news came upon the public with a painful degree of surprise that he was suffering from influenza complicated with gout, and was in a very feeble condition. It was known that Sir Andrew Clark had, shortly before, been to see him, but this was believed to be a purely unprofessional visit, as it was stated that the poet was perfectly well, and indeed in the enjoyment of exceptional vigour. Directly it was reported that he was ill, serious apprehensions were entertained, the fatal character of influenza in the case of elderly people being well known. Yet the news of his death, which took place at half-past one in the morning of October 6, 1892, fell upon every one with a great shock. All the members of his family were around him as he passed away, and the death-bed scene was remarkably impressive. "Lord Tennyson," said Sir Andrew Clark, "has had a gloriously beautiful death. In all my experience I have never witnessed anything more glorious. There were no artificial lights in the chamber, and all was in darkness save for the silvery light of the moon at its full. The soft beams fell upon the bed, and played upon the features of the dying poet like a halo."

It was at first difficult to realize that the brain which had coined so many beautiful and enduring fancies was for evermore powerless to create. It is not too much to say that the sorrow felt was universal. The severest critic of some of his later works, remembering only those by which his fame was established, realized that a light had gone out of the land. Even those who recognized to the full that it was in the nature of things hopeless to expect of him anything at all equal to his manhood's best work, felt that his death had caused a void in contemporary literature which could not easily be filled. Eloquent tributes to his genius

were offered in prompt largesse by the organs of public opinion, irrespective of creed, sect, or party. To many, as at last he lay at rest after the long life of fruitful and noble effort, must have come back the recollection of his own touching verses :—

“ Sunset and evening-star,
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

* * * * *

“ Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark ;

‘ For tho’ from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.”

THE END.



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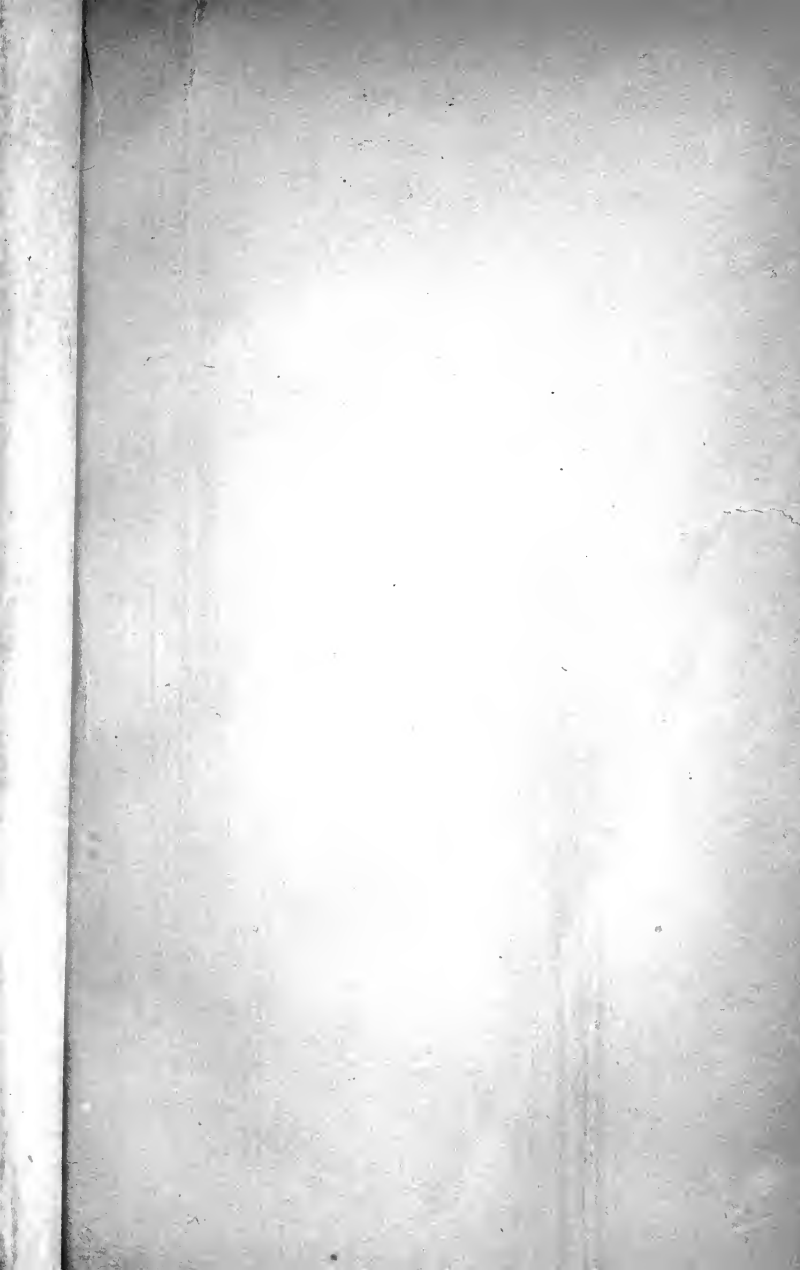
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